Little Steps, Big Changes

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by Burningstars98

Summary

Obsidian is growing up and learning all about how to be a Wachowski, but just when things seem to be settling into normalcy, it is shaken up once again by two new arrivals to Earth.

When an incident leads to his powers going out of his control, Obsidian has to face his past... and learn if this new life can really remain his future.

Chapter 1: Morning Chills

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"*Obbie*...?"

"Ya."

"What're you *doing*...?"

"Ya."

"*...Hey, gimme that!*"

The maniacal cackle that came from the toddler brought a goofy grin to Maddie's face as she saw Tails chasing after the little hedgehog- who had his brother's glove in one hand and his ducky blanket in the other- and was making a mad dash down the hall. Things had certainly gotten more active since Obsidian had figured out how to walk.

He hadn't quite figured out stairs, and thank God he hadn't figured out the ladder to the attic, but it wasn't an uncommon sight now for the toddler to do little zoomies; quickly waddling down the hall, through the living room, and- of course- grabbing his brothers' things and running off with them.

So far, Maddie had found Sonic's bag of rings, Knuckles' book, and so, so many of Tails' tools hidden in stashes around the house. In the laundry, under the couch, she even found one of Tails' screwdrivers shoved down into the dirt of one of her houseplants.

Tails snagged the tiny thief, spinning him around before taking the glove back. "Tiny, prickly menace!" He teased, smiling at Obsidian as he fell down with a giggle and smiled right back.

Things were going great in the Wachowski household so far. It had been almost two months since they'd found Obsidian all alone in the barn as a newborn, and almost three weeks since their encounter with Kaia, a being from Sonic's planet that Knuckles had been referring to as *'The Water Goddess.'* Following what had sounded like a centuries-long search for her stolen property and discovering its fate, she had left Green Hills- *mostly.* According to Carl, she had taken up residence on the lake's edges, meditating and resting on its banks.

Carl *also* said she was telling all of the fish to avoid his lines.

Obsidian had grown quickly in two months, but Maddie guessed that was to be expected. Hedgehogs grew up considerably faster than humans, and from what Sonic had told her, *he* was able to talk quite *well* from a young age.
Obsidian was saying a few words and had figured out how to *run* before he really properly *crawled*. He crawled most of the time, but when he really wanted something, he was up and hurrying towards it at full tilt.

Maddie was grateful he seemed to be in a good mood today, as he hadn't been all week with his first teeth trying to poke through.
Any parent would say that their children were growing up too fast, but for these little aliens, it seemed to go *way too fast.*

Sonic entered the kitchen and plopped down at the island. "Do we *have* to go to school today? It's *cold* enough to be a snow day!"

"But alas, no snow." Tom informed as he walked into the kitchen as well, "When we can't get the door open, *then* you can call it a snow day."

"Aww...!" Sonic rested his head on the island, "It's not as much fun when there's no baseball practice afterward..."

"Baseball season will be back soon, Sonic. Don't worry."
Maddie patted her son on the head and then took Obsidian from Tails, letting him rest on her hip. "And then we'll all be back out in the fields cheering you on."

That seemed to lift his spirits a little, and he hurried off again to collect his belongings.

"Are you gonna be at work all day, Mom?" Tails asked.

"Unfortunately... We don't have many appointments today, but a lot of paperwork to get sorted through and filed away. You can come by the clinic and help out after school if you'd like."

The fox bit his lip, "Eh... Legal papers aren't really my *thing.*"

Maddie grinned, "No problem, little guy. I think I can manage. Remember, when you guys get home, I want you to clean upstairs. I'm going to inspect *properly* when I get back, so no hiding everything under the beds, got it?"

"Yes, Ma'am!"

"Knuckles, I want you to clean up and organize around the house when you can, like when Obbie's taking a nap."

"I will do my best to perform admirably."

Maddie nodded with a smile, it was nice that all three of her older boys were at least a little responsible. Sonic *did* have a tendency to leave his shoes lying around, but that habit was being rectified by Obsidian's habit of taking and hiding them. And Tails could get so focused on his designing or tinkering that even if he nodded and said *'okay,'* he wasn't actually paying attention to what you said. Now, all the older boys worked their hardest to remember to put their belongings where they went; out of Obsidian's reach.

Speaking of which, Obsidian had grabbed Sonic's backpack and was throwing stuff out onto the floor.

"Hey!" Sonic scrambled over and pulled the toddler's hands out of the bag, patting them in the gentlest of slaps. "No no, Obbie. That's *my* stuff. No touch."

Obbie just looked at him with a blank, innocent expression as Sonic quickly placed everything back into the bag. He then looked over and saw Obbie was gnawing on one of his pencils. "Ah... Okay."
There was a whoosh and a brief opening of the freezer, and suddenly Sonic had the pencil and it had been replaced by one of Obbie's teething toys. "There, gnaw on *that.* That won't give you splinters. We're *hedgehogs*, not *woodchucks*."

Obbie cooed, his tiny little nubs of teeth peeking out of his gums.

"Actually, I was reading up on Earth animals last night," Tails informed as he collected his own bag, "And woodchucks don't actually eat wood. That's something *beavers* do."

Sonic frowned, "But that old saying! You know, *'how much wood could a woodchuck-'*"

"I know, it makes no sense."

Knuckles shook his head, "About as much sense as that bird losing his sanity over chocolate-flavored cereal."

"Alright guys, let's pick up the pace." Tom alerted, "I promised Wade I wouldn't be late this morning."

"Okay okay..." Sonic groaned with a smile, "Geez, Donut Lord's awfully cranky today."

"Bye, boys..." Maddie waved to the trio as they hurried out the front door, giving a shiver as a gust of cold air rushed in as they closed the door behind them. "Brr! Wouldn't wanna be out *there* all day!"

"Do you suppose that Kaia is doing well out at the lake?" Knuckles inquired, "I overheard Father mention it is freezing over."

"Kaia was wandering about your planet and Earth for a long time looking for the emeralds, Knuckles. I'm sure she knows how to get out of the elements if she needs to." Maddie reached into the fridge for her own lunch box, "The cold may not even bother her."

Knuckles nodded in thought and then turned to Obsidian who was still gnawing on his toy. "That is a much better method of bringing out your fangs than on wooden writing utensils, though I cannot help but wonder if you are taking our belongings *on purpose.*"

Obsidian looked back at him and then gave a big, two-toothed grin at the echidna. "Nuk!" He announced.

The echidna smiled back, patting the little hedgehog on the head.

The sound of coughing shook Blaze out of her mild doze on the floor. Her head snapped up, her eyes weary but trying hard to focus on the shape lying a few feet from her.

She hadn't properly slept in several days, trying to keep an ear and eye out for Silver, making sure he was still breathing.

The illness had started out slowly; a runny nose and watering eyes, it seemed like little more than a simple virus he would get over in a day or so... But then seemingly overnight, it escalated. He was feverish, he was coughing up mucus, his head pounded, and he was delirious enough that even if he *seemed* coherent when you spoke to him, he would have no memory of it the next time he awoke, asking the same questions over and over. His voice was raspy and coarse from coughing and fighting to breathe.

Blaze had done everything she could think of to help him... *Except* go to the humans for help. She didn't want to have to engage them openly- *not yet*- but as she looked back at the trembling, pale hedgehog trying to keep warm under her cloak and tunic, she knew there was not much choice now. Silver needed a doctor, he needed medicine, and that meant going down to the town below and finding some.

As his latest coughing fit began to ease, she looked to the entrance of their cave, and then crawled over to the hedgehog. "Silver...?" She whispered, she didn't even know if he understood her properly at this point. "...I'm going to get help, okay? I'll be back as soon as I can."
She then pressed her forehead against his, feeling the heat radiating off of him, and then hurried through the hole in the rock they used as an entrance and out into the early morning.

The wind bit at her exposed paw pads, and the gusts swept through her fur and chilled her to the bone, but she didn't have time to stiffen from the cold. She rushed into it head-on, jumping down the hillside, rock to rock, in the direction of the town.
She'd seen a place where a lot of humans took the creatures of the town, surely there must be someone *there* who could help her...

Chapter End Notes

Aaaaaaand we're back with more antics!

Chapter 2: The Lilac Kitten

Allison looked up as she heard the doorbell to the clinic ring, but while the door opened, there appeared to be nobody there. There shouldn't be, their first appointment wasn't for another hour.

The first thirty minutes of her shift had been rather dull, actually. Maddie was in the back office filing papers with the other vet techs and prepping stock orders for items they were low on, and Allison's job was the same as ever; watch the front lobby for anyone who might come in needing help. So far nobody, and so Allison had pulled up a game of solitaire on her phone, absentmindedly moving the cards around into stacks while listening for the doorbell or the phone to ring.

She'd supposed it was just the cold morning wind catching the door and pulling it open, but then she heard a soft whimper, and she saw a pair of tiny, furry hands grasp onto the edge of the counter; she leaned over the front to look at the owner.

Standing under the height of the desk and looking up nervously was yet another little alien, but a creature much more *common* to the vet's office; a *cat.*
She was lacking any shoes or gloves, and her tail tightly curled around her legs and ankles.

"Hello..." Allison cooed softly, "...And what can I *do* for you?"

The little cat didn't speak, her fingers kneading the counter and her little claws folding in and out.

Allison climbed out of the chair and came around the counter, bending down and trying to get closer to her level. "Are you okay? I'm not going to *hurt* you..."

The cat looked at her for a moment, and then spoke with a soft, but frightened voice. "I-I am alright... But..." She bit her lip, "...But my friend is not and I don't know what to do!"

"Hey hey hey... No tears...!" Allison cooed, getting even lower as the cat tried to pull herself together after a tear slipped out. "No tears... It's alright, are they *hurt?*"

She shook her head, "H-He's sick, and he needs medicine, but I don't know where to find it, or what the right kind is, and-"

"Shh... It's okay..."
Allison took a moment to look at her closely. She looked to be about Sonic's age, and her fur was a lilac color with darker patches on the tip of her tail, her paws, and the long fur that hung from the back of her head like hair. Her eyes were a brilliant amber color but red like she'd been crying before she'd arrived at the clinic. As she moved closer, Allison also saw little patches of black soot on her fur, and she smelled rather smoky like she'd been in a fire.

"Hi... My name's Allison," the woman murmured softly, "What's yours?"

"...Blaze, Miss Allison."

"Blaze, that's a *pretty* name... Now, you said your friend's sick?"

Blaze nodded hard, "He has a fever, and is coughing and his nose is running, and he says his head hurts terribly. He also can't seem to remember much of what I say."

"Hmm... I think I can help find the right medicine to help him, but I would need to *see* him. Would you be okay with taking me to him?"

"Do you promise you won't hurt him?"

Allison smiled, putting a hand on her chest over her heart. "I promise."

Blaze nodded, and then she took Allison's hand and gave it a little tug. "Come, we must hurry! I do not feel well knowing he is left all alone!"

"Hold on a second, I gotta tell my other workers here where I'm going so they don't worry either, okay?"

Blaze nodded, ducking back behind the counter so anyone walking by wouldn't see her.

Allison hurried down the hall, looking around until she found Maddie in one of the offices. "*Maddie...!*" She hissed.

The woman looked up, "Yes?" Maddie asked, mimicking the same whispering tone despite clearly not knowing why.

Allison looked back towards the front, "Could you or someone else watch the front for a little bit? I just had another little furry friend come in looking for help because her friend's sick."

Maddie understood immediately and gave a nod. "Go, we've got it covered."

"Thanks."
Allison then hurried back to the front and found Blaze hidden under the desk. She offered her a hand, "Come on, let's go find your friend."

Blaze took her hand and grasped it tightly, "Oh, no need to worry yourself with *finding* him, I know *precisely* where he is."

"Of course..."

It took Allison some effort to keep up with Blaze as the cat hopped around and scrambled through the brush on the cliffside, as agile as any housecat. Allison may have hiked as a hobby back in college, but that was a few years ago, and she wasn't in as good of shape as she used to be.

Blaze, fortunately, would notice when she was lagging behind and would stop, settling on a rock until she caught up. She led the woman up the slope towards the cliffs, and then she saw a small crevice in one of the cliffs; the entrance to a cave.
Fortunately, the crevice was wide enough for her to squeeze through, and on the other side of the crevice was a narrow cavern. Little charred sticks and scorch marks on the floor told her that a fire had been made, the scent of smoke saying it had only recently gone out. It also explained the soot and smoky smell of Blaze's fur.

Blaze crawled across the floor to another alien, another hedgehog about her age, who was wrapped tightly in a cloak and trembling in his sleep.
"Silver...?" The cat encouraged, "Silver, wake up. Please?"

The hedgehog tried to sniffle as he stirred, but it came out as a loud snort, followed by a series of coughs as his lungs fought the mucus filling them. "Blay...Blaze...?" He rasped, his eyes barely opening. "...Where'd you *go*...?"

"To get help, just as I promised." Blaze looked to Allison with worry, "Can you help him?"

"I'm going to try, Blaze... Silver, huh?" She grinned as she looked at his pale gray fur, "It *suits* you."

Silver looked at her, but he seemed far too weak and out of it to really appreciate her compliment. He coughed again, coughing before spitting out chunks of mucus that were all too green.

"Oh, Sweetheart...!" Allison bent down and scooped him up into her arms. She found under the cloak he was also wearing a long-sleeved tunic, but the markings on it told her it was actually meant for a *girl*; looking at Blaze's completely naked form, she could only guess that the cat had given up any clothing she could to him so he could feel warmer.
She tucked the cloak a little tighter around him, and then looked back towards the entrance. "Come on, let's get you both somewhere warmer so I can get a good look at you..."

She squeezed back through the crevice and back out into the morning air, trying to keep Silver out of the wind as they made the trek back down the slope towards her car. She laid Silver down on the back seat and Blaze scrambled up into the passenger, and then they were off and back towards the clinic.

She wasn't surprised when Maddie was at the back door when she returned and pulled the little hedgehog out of the back seat, "Come on, it's warmer inside, I promise."

Maddie didn't speak, but instead took Silver carefully from Allison and Allison took Blaze's hand to guide her behind her. Maddie laid the hedgehog down on the table and then grabbed a chair so Blaze could stand on it and see what was happening.

"How long has he been sick, Blaze?" Allison asked.

The cat tilted her head, "He began sniffling a while ago, but we believed it was simply the temperature making his nose run, but in the past few days, he's suddenly worsened to not being able to get up on his own."

Silver looked around and winced at the light, "Ah...! It's so *bright*...!"

"I'm sorry, baby..." Maddie apologized, pulling the cloak back to examine the hedgehog. Silver's body shuddered from the cold, but he didn't fight her as she checked his body for any injuries. "Well, I don't feel anything broken, so that's good."

Silver began to cough some more, but Allison grabbed the trash can for him to spit the mucus out into.

"Eww, gross...!" Maddie gave a slight smirk, "But it looks like you're not having trouble getting rid of it."

Silver shuddered, "C-Cold...!"

"I'm sorry, baby..."
Maddie looked at Allison, "This looks like a pretty bad case of the Flu, which in this cold doesn't surprise me... Stay here with them, I'm going to get something for him."

Blaze looked as Maddie hurried out of the room, "Where is she going?"

"She's figured out what's wrong with him and is going to get him some medicine."

"So he will recover?"
Blaze gave a sigh of relief, "Thank goodness...!"

"And what about *you,* young lady? How're you feeling? The flu is contagious, after all. It can pass from one person to another."

"I am unchanged, albeit a little hungry, I did not search the bins for any food this morning."

The woman nodded slowly; they'd found the trashcan thieves. "I think I can help out with that..."

Maddie gave the hedgehog some children's cold and flu syrup, which he took down without a complaint.

But it worked wonders, and within fifteen minutes, he was breathing easier and had zonked out in the corner of Maddie's office. His fur was also covered in soot and smelled smoky, but unlike Blaze, Allison had also found several small scars from burns under his fur; they were old wounds, so it appeared that the soot and smoke might not have been entirely from their self-made fires after all.
She made sure to do a proper examination of Blaze as well, just to be sure, but other than a few cuts and scrapes that were healing on her hands and feet, she was given a clean bill of health.

Allison took this as a good time to discreetly get the cat's measurements; she wanted to get the little lady some clothes and shoes, and it would be quicker if she had her size in mind. Blaze wasn't sure about leaving Silver again, but Maddie had promised that she wouldn't let

anything happen to him, and so the cat had gone out with Allison after putting on a spare lab coat as a covering.

Allison wasn't sure if it was because she was the first little alien girl to arrive in Green Hills or not, but Blaze seemed to carry herself with a lot more poise. She walked with her shoulders back, back straight, and head held high which only added to Allison's urge to call her *'Young Lady.'* Maddie's son Knuckles walked with *pride* in his gait, Blaze walked with *elegance.*

It was still early in the morning, so not many people were out on the street. Allison was grateful for that since she didn't want to gravitate too much attention to the little cat.
"So this place we are traveling to," Blaze asked curiously, "The store. Is it some sort of depository for any spare resources that you can just take as needed?"

Allison tilted her head, "Well... Not quite. You have to *purchase* the items, but they try to keep everything in stock so you can always find what you need... You've never heard of a store before?"

Blaze folded her arms across her chest, "No... Silver and I grew up in a ruined city, so there wasn't much left. Very few still lived there, and anything you found, you held onto it. Silver and I tried to share what we found with others, but... Sometimes there just wasn't enough. We would have left, but... There was no guarantee that other towns hadn't also been decimated and they were in the same condition as us, so... We stayed."

"Until you came here."

Blaze nodded, "Unintentionally, of course... We have been trying to determine exactly what caused the event in the first place, but from what we've seen, your town and the surrounding area are far better than what we left."

"Sounds like it... Alright, here we are."
Allison opened the door and they both gave little shudders as the cold of the outside was suddenly replaced by a drastic, but welcome warmth. Allison walked over and pulled a basket from the corral. "You can ride along in the basket if you wish."

Blaze looked at the basket curiously, "Tiny, metal wire wagons..." She whispered, and then with a quick hop, she jumped up and climbed over the side into the basket. "You do not mind being my transport?"

"Not at all. I can make sure you don't get lost, and you're a little higher up so you can see where I'm going."

Blaze nodded as she looked at the tall shelving units, "So what are we here to collect?"

"Some clothes for you, first of all. The boys can wear nothing but shoes and gloves all they want, but I have a feeling you'd prefer something more."

Blaze gave a nod, and then they were off.

Allison took her to the children's clothing and allowed the cat to look from the cart and choose what she liked best. Blaze was slightly overwhelmed with the choices of color, fabric, and design, but over time, they uncovered her preference and worked from there.

By the end, they had chosen her a little nightgown, three outfits comprised of a dress and leggings that she could mix and match, and a puffy pink coat. Next was shoes, and they got her a pair of snow boots, a pair of white and pink sneakers, and a pair of little mary-janes for *'special occasions.'* Gloves were easy, with Blaze grabbing two pairs of white gloves and putting them in the basket with her.

Allison then went to the grocery section and grabbed a few items. If Blaze was interested in anything else, she didn't speak up but marveled at how much food was on the shelves.

But she was even *more* amazed when they went up to the front to pay.

"Paper?" She looked at the bills Allison was pulling out of her wallet, "You give them paper in exchange for food and clothing?"

"Yup."

"Why? What makes this green paper special? What purpose does it serve?"

"Well, it's special because the ruler of our country *said* it's special."

"So... If he were to say it *isn't* special anymore, it would be worth as any other paper *immediately?*"

"Exactly... Unfortunately, our country has moved away from a currency that's actually *worth* something outside of a *promise* that it's special."

Blaze frowned, "That does not seem like a good system. Any moment your entire economy can collapse into ruin!"

"Yeah, I know... But it is how it is."
She handed the bills to the cashier, who looked at Blaze with a smile, and then shook her head.

"They just keep comin', huh?"

"Is that such a bad thing?" Allison asked with a grin, and then took her change and then walked back out to the car with their items. "Alright, we're gonna head back to the clinic so I can finish off my work for today, and then we'll figure out where you and Silver will sleep tonight."

"You do not wish for us to go back to our cave?"

"Blaze, I have a feeling that being out in the cold in that cave is partially why Silver got sick in the first place. We want to avoid him getting worse, right?"

Blaze nodded, "Absolutely."

"Great."
Allison smiled as the cat gave a yawn, "And it looks like *you* could use some sleep as well."

Blaze's ears drooped, "I... I wanted to ensure that Silver was alright. That was my priority."

"Well, now you have others to help you..."

The little cat smiled, folding her hands in her lap. "Yes... Others..."

Chapter 3: Planning

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

What *were* they going to do...?

Allison had left the clinic for a little bit to buy Blaze some clothes, and while they were gone, Silver had gotten himself settled in the corner of the office, curled up on a spare, dog bed and an old blanket tightly wrapped around him. It wasn't much, but he was so zonked out from exhaustion and the medication she'd given him, he couldn't really complain.

This had given Maddie some time to look at him a little closer; he appeared to be just a little bit *older* than Sonic, his quills and fur a light gray color singed by fire and dusted in soot. He wore torn gloves and remnants of socks, but no shoes. Underneath the shredded material, however, Maddie could see markings on his hands and feet; glowing markings that as he slept pulsed in and out of color, like a machine in sleep mode.
His quills flared out on the top of his head a lot more than Sonic's, which stuck more to clumping in the back; his were long and doing so around his ears, and then two longer, larger clumps drooping down in the back. His chest fur was different, too; not being tan like Sonic's, but white and longer, puffing out like a collar and a lot like the direction Obsidian's was heading.

Both he and Blaze appeared to have been all alone just like Sonic was, but in an entirely *different* environment. Sonic had grown up in the *forest,* getting dirt in his quills and grass stains on his paws; these two appeared to have been living in a place where smoke, soot and fire was frequent. She wondered if it was susceptible to forest fires, or perhaps it was volcanic. Either way, she had to wonder how their lungs were, having spent time inhaling smoke and ash so much.

She wanted to take them in, just like she had with the rest of her boys, but that warning from Commander Walters kept repeating in her head: ***Stay out of it any further.***

He had a point; the couple already had four aliens under their roof and some mornings it *did* feel a little cramped, but these were children who needed help, someone to tend to them and make them feel safe.

What was she going to do?

Those thoughts lingered in her head until Allison returned, Blaze following behind her closely with some fast-food fries she was nibbling on. "We're back."

"So I see... You find something suitable?"

Blaze nodded, "Miss Allison was kind enough to purchase my new garments for me. She says that I do not have to repay her, but I feel that it would be selfish not to at least attempt to."

Allison bent down to Blaze's level, "Hey, how about this... You can help me with things around here, and we'll consider *that* as repayment, alright?"
Blaze nodded, but then gave a yawn. "You wanna get some sleep first?"

"No. I will sleep later."

Allison tilted her head slightly, "Okay... But I don't want you to keep pushing it further and further, okay? Sleep is good for you, you know."

"Of course... Where do you wish for me to start?"

Maddie looked around for a moment, "Erm... Here, you can help us by putting these papers through the shredder."
She patted a large stack of papers, "You put the papers into this machine over here one by one and it will cut them into tiny strips for us."

"Of course."
Blaze walked over and took a few papers from the pile and slipped one into the machine. It whirred softly, and she watched the strips slide out and into the trashcan below. She then looked to Silver as he slightly shifted position. "...He is breathing much easier now."

"Yes, and probably *sleeping* much better." Maddie gave her a smile, "If you don't mind me asking, how long were you in that cave?"

Blaze shrugged, "It was hard to keep track of that sort of thing where we were before. Every day was just another day that you were blessed to survive to, that was what mattered. It was warmer than it is now when we arrived though..."

"That's alright, I was just curious."

Blaze nodded, putting another piece of paper in the shredder.

Maddie looked to Allison, "Alli, I don't think it would be wise to keep them *here*." She whispered, "There's too much stuff for them to potentially *hurt* themselves with, but-"

"But you're worried enough *already* with the *baby* and 'You-Know-Who' not *knowing* about said baby." Allison guessed, earning a nod.

"I don't want you to think that you don't have a choice-"

"Maddie, I was going to volunteer anyway. He told you guys to keep out of housing anybody else, but he said nothing about the *rest of town.* I've got a big house with just me in it, it'll be fine and they can hang out here at the clinic with us for a little bit until we get everything else settled. They'll be searching your house on the regular, not *mine*. With luck, they'll never even know."

"Know what?"
Blaze paused in her work.

Allison waved her hand, "Oh, some guy just has a problem with kids from other planets showing up here, is all."

"Oh? If we're going to be a problem-"

"You *won't*. The guy doesn't even *live* here, and who cares what *he* thinks?"

The cat was still for a moment, and then took some more papers. "Very well... I will trust your judgment."

Maddie gave a light smile, "You sure you can handle them both?"

"Oh please. *Look at them,*" She pointed to the polite kitten and snoozing hoglet, "How much trouble do they look like?"

Silver barely remembered *anything* from the past few days, but he knew that as he came back out of the murkiness, that he was not in the cave. It was far too warm... But not in the way he was used to.

He'd been slipping in and out of various realities, it felt like. Sometimes he was in the cave overlooking the little town of Green Hills, mountains on all sides and sloping down into green forest and winding roads of gray.

Sometimes he would find himself back in the ruins of the Isle, watching lava flow past their temporary shelter below him. The river of molten rock never ended or slowed; it seemed to perpetually run and course from one side of the isle to the other, making its way to the Boiling Sea where steam always plumed up from the shore and the air smelled of burning flesh as sea life was enveloped in its rush.

Sometimes... He felt like he was *nowhere*, floating aimlessly in a black void, and soft whispers came from all around, like someone was trying to tell him something in a language he didn't understand. Flickers of scenes would come and go, places he felt like he'd been to but couldn't remember *when.*

Right now, he felt a warmth around him, but not the heat of lava. The occasional soft whirring sound came from somewhere, but he couldn't make out exactly where or what it might be coming from.
Unfamiliar voices whispered, speaking as though in conversation. Did he know them? It was hard to think... To remember.

When he opened his eyes, all his eyes met was a horribly bright light, and he winced, pulling the blanket over his head with a groan.

Wait... A *blanket*? Where did he get a *blanket?*

His fingers felt the material, rubbing it between his fingers. It felt... *Soft,* softer than any material he'd ever felt.

Through the blanket, he then felt a hand touch his shoulder and gently stroke his shoulder, his side, and down his leg in gentle, comforting motions.

"Hey... Feel any *better* under there...?"
The voice was stronger now, but no less gentle. It was not one he remembered exactly, but it seemed vaguely familiar.

"...Eh..." He rasped, wincing at how rough his throat felt. "Not... Not really..."

"Silver...!"
Blaze's voice encouraged him to pull the blanket back and face the light, and he saw his friend come up beside the human who sat beside him. Had he seen this woman before?

He looked around; this was definitely not the cave. This was inside of a human structure, and he was on the floor on some sort of small mattress in the corner of a room. "H-How did..."

"You were really out of it when we brought you here to help you," The woman said.

"Do not be surprised if we must have this conversation *again* in a few hours." Blaze expressed, and the hedgehog frowned. "He has not had a good record of remembering previous events up to this point."

"Wha...What are you talking-"
He was cut off by a fit of coughing, but it wasn't as long or as hard as he had remembered.

"The medicine's helping out a bit, at least." The woman gave a smile, "My name's Allison... Are you *thirsty,* Silver?"

As a matter of fact, he was. Quite thirsty, in fact. He gave her a nod, and she nodded back. "Alright, just sit tight, and I'll get you something."

She got up, and Silver looked to Blaze, who was dressed in some sort of long, white coat. "What're you wearing...?" He then looked and found himself in her old tunic, "...Why am I wearing your tunic?"

Blaze blushed, "You were so cold and shivering, I didn't know what else to do, so..."

"You gave me... *Everything*?"

Blaze nodded, "That's what friends do, right...? But don't worry, Miss Allison went and got me new clothes! *Brand new* clothes, Silver, without any holes or singe marks."

"And I will do the same for *you* once you're well enough."
Allison returned with a small cup, filled with the clearest water Silver had ever seen. "You feel good enough to sit up?"

Silver tried to do so, but found that he needed Allison's hand on his back to keep him upright. She used the other hand to then gently tilt the cup to his lips, and though he spilled a little, he was able to get most of the water down. It felt so good on his rough throat, and it tasted

almost sweet; there was no grit of sand or dirt in it, or the horrible smell of some chemical mixed in, it was pure, clean water.

It was a shame that the cup was so small, because once it was gone, his throat desperately wanted more.

"I'm sure you *could* drink more," Allison remarked, guessing what he was thinking. "But we have to take this slow, okay? We'll work our way up."

Silver nodded to her, still uncertain of exactly how he and Blaze had arrived here. Blaze seemed safe with this human however, and so he decided that he should be too. "So... Are we going to *stay* here?"

Allison shrugged, "Sort of. You'll be coming back to my house tonight, but for today? I think you and Blaze should just rest and get some sleep... You both need that."

"And then... What next?"

"We'll take this one day at a time... We'll worry about what next when tomorrow comes..."

Another day of peace and quiet at the house, another day of just getting to do whatever I felt like doing... I liked this kind of day.

At one time, routine was something I *dreaded*; a routine day was being tortured and prodded by scientists for hours. But now, it was sitting at home with my oldest brother and the canine, scribbling on blank pieces of paper with crayons, finding whatever items my brothers had left in my reach and distributing them across the house, and in the evening, getting to greet my new parents when they came home and then sitting with them on the couch as the house wound down after a long day.

Today, Knuckles had left his homework unattended for a few minutes while he went to the kitchen for a drink, and I was fully prepared to strike. Crayon in hand, I pulled myself up on the coffee table, leaning over the paper and preparing to scribble my mark on-

"Don't even think about it!"
Knuckles' voice hollered from the kitchen, and I could see that he wasn't even in view. "I can *feel* your mischief rising up, and I do not appreciate it."

He could *feel* that I was going to do something *naughty?* Add that to the list of abilities *this* Knuckles had that *others didn't*. Though if I was being honest with myself, if other Knuckles' could sense that also, they would not be fooled by their Robotniks quite so much.

I was still in my striking position when the echidna came back into the living room, a glass of water in hand. "The other members of our household may not believe that you are as smart as you are, but you cannot fool me. You know *better* than that."

I frowned at him, and he gave me a knowing smirk. *Spoilsport.*

He took a seat and then carefully took the crayon from my hand, laying it down on the other end of the table. "Kaia spoke of your level of power... I cannot help but wonder how much of that power you are *aware* of..."

If the level of power I wielded was anything close to my previous power, they had no idea how much damage I could cause with just a thought. I could already warp from place to place through shadows, but my shape-shifting, my crystal and chaos manipulation? I hadn't quite figured those out, if I even still *had* them. For now, I was a shadow-walker, and that was versatile enough by itself.

I wasn't prepared for him to scoop me up into his hands and hold me out so that our gazes met.
"...Or where you *came from*." He finished his own thought, "How did you wind up on that farm? Do you... Remember what happened to you?"

Oh Knuckles... I thought, *...You have no idea how much I remember...*

Chapter End Notes

So Silver and Blaze will not be staying with the Wachowskis or with Wade. I wanted to put them with someone else in town so that I could use them as a way to branch out and give more life to this little town outside of our protagonists.

There's been a lot of those two in these early chapters rather than Obsidian, but I needed to get them settled in a little. We'll be getting back to regular baby asshole shenanigans soon :)

Chapter 4: Back to the House

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"...Mom should have been back by now."
Tails peered out the front window, searching the driveway for his mom's car. "What's taking her so long?"

"Mother did state that there was a significant amount of official papers that needed to be read and signed," Knuckles reminded, "Perhaps she is simply taking the time to ensure everything is correct."

"Look at the bright side!"
They both turned to where Sonic sat at the table, ketchup and mustard smeared on his muzzle from his burger. "Mom's not here to make dinner, so we get fast-food!"

Knuckles hummed, "I prefer Mother's cooking. You can tell she put time and care into it. Fast food is prepared *sloppily* at best."

"Sloppily is right."
Tom handed Sonic a napkin, "Wipe that off your face, you look like a clown."

Sonic grinned, "Ooh... Grease fingers...!" He wiggled his fingers at his dad, who looked like he was glad he'd told the hedgehog to remove his gloves before diving into his food.

Knuckles took a seat and was handed his chicken salad, and Tails took his own burger from the paper sack, unwrapping it carefully and making sure not to make a mess- unlike his older brother.

Obsidian sat in his highchair, tipping his bottle up and sucking the formula down without complaint.

A few minutes passed of relative quiet as everyone's mouths were full, and then the front door opened and a smiling, but worn-out Maddie stepped into the house.

"Mom, you're home!"
Tails got down from his chair and ran up to his mom, hugging her tightly. "Did you get everything done at work?"

"Yup, but it took a little longer than we thought. We had some... *complications* come up."

"Really?"
Then the fox sniffed, "You smell like *smoke!* Did the clinic catch fire!? Did you-"

"Whoa whoa whoa, hold on there." Maddie grinned, "No, the clinic's fine. There wasn't a fire, but I *was* treating someone who *also* smelled like smoke."

"Oh... Are they okay?"

"They're going to be just fine..." She stood up straight again, accepting a hug and kiss from her husband, "Hey, Babe."

"Hey, glad to see you were able to get away from the papers for a little bit."

"Ugh, you have no idea what I've been through today..." She grabbed the last burger from the bag and unwrapped it, "Allison and I found our little trash thieves, though."

"Oh? Finally catch them on camera, huh?"

"Eh...Not quite." She smirked, "Let's just say at this rate there may be more little *paws* than *hands* in a future graduating class..."

"More kids from our planet?" Sonic leaned across the table, "Really!? Are they nice? Are they gonna live here at the house too!?"

"Slow down." Tom shook his head, "We've barely got the room for the four of you as it is, and Walters told us not to take anyone else in- and he doesn't even *know* about Obbie yet."

"With luck, he may never know." Knuckles murmured solemnly, "If what I have seen of him is true, then he may very well try to take him if he finds out."

"The final answer being *'No, we're not going to take them in.'*" Maddie finally answered, "Allison has been kind enough to look after them for the time being, but I'm sure you'll get to meet them once they're more comfortable with people. They're both kinda skittish at the moment."

"But soon?" Tails asked.

"Probably. Allison said she'd be taking them to the clinic during the day, so you'll probably get the chance to meet them on Friday."

"What's Friday?" Sonic asked.

The woman gave a smile, "Don't you remember, Sonic? You all have shots scheduled for Friday."

"*No*...!" Sonic whined, slumping to the floor. "*Can't!* I'm scheduled to be sick that day!"

"All the more reason to take you in to the clinic, then!" Tom assured, and the hedgehog groaned.
The man then leaned over to his wife, "You sure Allison can handle two of them right off the bat?"

Maddie grinned, "I think she's got what it takes... They seem like they can't be *too* much trouble."

Blaze pressed her hands up on the window of the car as they drove down the road, watching the businesses and then homes pass by them. Even as the town was winding down and everyone was returning to their homes, the streets seemed to bustle with activity. Blaze had never seen so many people in one place before, it had always been just her and Silver, and occasionally they would run into another survivor trying to make it in their shattered home...

Silver had been trying to look around as well, but between the medication and his exhaustion from fighting this illness, he had crashed back into sleep in the backseat, his markings once again pulsing slowly.

"You like watching the traffic...?"
Allison's voice was soft so she didn't wake the slumbering hedgehog in the backseat.

Blaze nodded slowly, "This many people... It's... *New* to me."

"There really *weren't* many people left around, huh...?"

"No... Everyone we knew was only there for a few days and then... We never saw them again. The only reason Silver and I made it this far was because we never went anywhere without the other..."
Her fingers curled into fists and her ears folded back as she remembered that morning, having to leave Silver all alone in the cave so she could get him help. Making that choice had torn her apart... But it was the only choice she *could* make. She and Silver were the only one the other had, she had to protect him, no matter what.

"Hey... It's alright."
Allison briefly released the wheel with a hand to pat the little cat's back, "You don't need to worry about being on your own anymore... That's what I'm here for."

Blaze looked back to her and managed a little smile, smiling was not something she was used to.

The car slowed and then turned, and Blaze saw a house ahead of them on the tiny road leading up to it. It seemed all of the houses had them. Allison rolled up and then a door on the front of the house magically rose up into the air and the car rolled into the large room before the door closed behind them. "Whoa...!"

Allison shrugged, "Eh, it's okay, I guess...Just a garage." She turned off the vehicle and then unlatched her seatbelt, "Alright, let's get you guys settled inside..."

She went around to the back of the car and carefully scooped Silver up from the back seat; the hedgehog shifted a bit, but otherwise remained asleep. Blaze followed and then opened a second door for the woman, which led into the rest of the house. "Welcome to the Riley House."

"You are...certain you do not mind us being here?"

Allison laid Silver down on the couch and then bent down to Blaze's level, taking one of her hands and squeezing it gently. "Sweetie, listen... I don't know everything about the situation

you and Silver grew up in, but I want you to know that *here,* you are welcome to stay as long as you want to, not just until Silver gets better. I don't want you to spend your time wondering when I'm going to kick you out, because I won't do that. You are not a bother."

Blaze nodded, "...Okay, Miss Allison."

"Good... Now, hang out here with Silver while I grab him some bedding."

Blaze climbed onto the couch alongside Silver, watching his chest rise and fall in a slow, easy motion. He was breathing, he was going to be okay.

Allison returned with a blanket and spare pillow, carefully nestling the pillow under Silver's head and stroking his quills gently. The hedgehog gave a soft purring sound in his sleep, and she smiled before looking to Blaze. "You hungry? Cuz I am."

Blaze nodded, hopping off of the couch and following her into the kitchen.

The woman walked up to a machine that hummed softly, and opened a drawer in the bottom. Cold air and fog plumed out of it as she opened it, and pulled a box out before closing the drawer once more. "Hot Pockets is fast and easy..." She hummed to herself.

Blaze looked at the drawer curiously, "...How come the interior of this drawer is cold, while the rest of the house is warm?"

"It's a freezer, Blaze, and the two doors over it are the fridge. They use electricity to blow cold air on the items inside, to keep them cold in the fridge, and to keep them frozen in the freezer."

"Incredible... Do you have an oven, one that does the opposite?"

"Yup, right over here."
She placed the box down on the counter and then pointed to a large machine to her left, "This is the oven and range. I can cook food in the oven down here," she opened a large door with a glass window on it, "Or in pots on the top here." She pointed to four little circles on the top, "This is an *electric* range, so it uses electricity to heat up the bottom of the top plate here to heat things up, but there are also *gas* ranges, which use flammable gas and fire to heat up the food."

Blaze pulled her hands closer to her chest, her brows furrowed a bit. "...I prefer the electric kind, I think."

"Not a fan of fire, huh? That's fair, you probably saw a *lot* of it back home."

Blaze nodded slowly, "Yes... I did..."
She then looked as Allison pulled two small pastries of some kind out of the box, put them on a plate, and then put the plate inside of another, mechanical box. "And what is this?" She asked, looking at the box.

"This is a microwave. It heats up food too, but using energy waves instead of fire or radiating heat. It's also much *faster* than the oven."

She pressed a few buttons on the side and then the machine hummed to life, a light coming on and allowing Blaze to see the plate spinning around. "So it spins to get the energy on the food evenly?"

"Right! You're so smart."

The cat blushed a bit, and then watched the pastries turn around and around until suddenly the light turned off and the machine beeped loudly. "Is it done?"

"Uh huh."
Allison pulled them out, steam coming off of the pastries and a little bit of the contents oozing out on one end. "Not the healthiest food out there, but it works for a quick meal."
She carried them over to the table and then she placed one on another plate for Blaze, sliding it across to her. "Careful, it's hot."

Blaze had dealt with hotter, but she followed her host's instructions, removing her new gloves just in case the filling got on her hands, and blew gently on the pastry before taking a bite. The contents had a flavor she had never experienced, but it made her mouth water and she had to keep herself from trying to eat the whole thing all at once, taking breaks between bites to really enjoy it.

"It's good, isn't it?"

Blaze nodded, waiting until she'd swallowed to speak. "It is very good... Thank you."

"You're welcome, little lady..."
Blaze paused from taking another bite, looking at her host. "...What?"

"*Little Lady... Young Lady...*" Blaze tilted her head, "You and Miss Maddie both keep *calling* me that."

"Do you not *want* us to? Cuz we can-"

"Oh no, it is fine! It is just... How did you *know* that I was of *noble blood?*"

Allison placed her pastry down, "I didn't, until just now when you told me... But you seem to walk and talk a bit more formally than the others from your planet that I've seen. You carry yourself with an elegance and grace that the others do not, just like a young lady with good manners should."

Blaze blushed, "Thank you... I've tried to retain that, to try to make my ancestors proud of me."

"And I'm sure they're all very proud of you..."

Blaze wasn't so sure of that, but this woman's praise was certainly a comfort. She finished up her food and then followed Allison to discard of the plate in the bin.

It was about this time that her body finally decided that enough was enough; she needed to sleep, and it manifested in a big yawn and her legs trying to fall out from under her.

"Oh dear, I'd say it's time for bed." Allison giggled, helping the cat over to the couch.
She quickly retrieved a blanket and pillow for the cat as well, helping her get settled onto the couch with Silver, who was still zonked out and oblivious to everything.

"If either one of you need anything before morning," the woman alerted, "Don't hesitate to come to talk to me, okay? I'd rather you wake me than have you hurt yourself trying to figure out how to get it yourself. I'll leave my door open just in case."

"Are you..." Blaze remembered what she'd said about them not being a bother, and then nodded. "...Yes, of course."

"Good girl... Goodnight, Blaze."

"Goodnight, Miss Allison..."
Blaze curled up under the blanket, snuggling her head into the softest pillow she'd ever rested her head on. Between her exhaustion, a full belly, and finally, finally feeling completely safe, she was in a deep slumber within seconds.

Chapter End Notes

So this Blaze is a descendant of the Sonic Rush Blaze, but kinda separate from the one in Sonic 06. The exact story of the Tragedy of their world will be explained further later on.

Chapter 5: Long Nights and Early Mornings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

This new development had me concerned.

More of our kind in town would mean more attention from the human law, and the more of us there were, the more likely they would decide we were a threat and try to lock us away- or at least keep us separated from the humans.

Maddie and Tom were my parents, they were the first to really treat me kindly, and the idea of being taken from them brought a tight knot into my stomach... That, and my old job called me back during my naptime.

Shortly after my brief conversation with Knuckles, he'd put me in my cradle and I had gone to sleep... And I'd dreamed of other worlds. I saw Sonic aloft in a palace in the sky, a pair of blue feathery wings protruding from his back... I saw Tails searching the sea floor in a submarine... Knuckles an aged warrior standing over an established village on Angel Island...

It seemed that my brothers' other selves were doing well on their own, but why did the universe feel like I needed to check on them? The three I shared a house with were really the only versions of them I *cared about*...

...And then Maddie came home saying that two more from our planet had arrived.

Two...Two... What others of Sonic's friends in other realities traveled in groups of two? My fellow science experiment traveled with one bat and one robotic pyromaniac... That's three. Sonic's little fangirl sometimes traveled with her rabbit friend plus a chao, that's three. The two reptiles had their insect apprentice, that's three. So who-

...Oh. Oh no. I thought of a duo, a duo I knew all too well.

I laid in my crib, staring up at the ceiling and clutching Ducky for dear life. I had no gods to pray to, practically being one myself, but if I had, I would have prayed for these two mystery mobians to not be the two I was thinking about.

It could easily be someone not usually associated with Sonic at all, but so far, our chances weren't great in that regard. Everyone knew who Sonic was in so many realities, that the idea of someone unfamiliar showing up was minuscule at best.

I must've been making noise as I fretted, because then Maddie was coming and scooping me up into her arms. I felt a little bad for waking her; she must've been hard at work all day trying to get these newcomers comfortable and now I wasn't letting her get the sleep she needed.

"Shh..." She whispered, bouncing me a little as she rocked back and forth. "It's okay..." She whispered.

I knew she was right, I knew that this wasn't that big of a deal, but that didn't stop my head from coming up with all sorts of possibilities.
What if these newcomers recognized me for what I was, like Kaia had? What if they tried to take advantage of my weak, uncoordinated form and hurt me? All of the thoughts that I'd had when I first arrived here were whirring back into place, the fear of being taken away, of being hurt, of losing the only people that cared about me...

But all of those thoughts I'd had? They'd been proven wrong. The way that I had gotten myself all wrung up into a tight ball had been for nothing because these humans and their other adopted children didn't care about anything but loving me for who I was... Or who they *thought* I was.

They didn't know what I'd done.

Man, it was really hard to pull yourself out of a downward spiral of anxiety on your own, and it was hard to get help pulling yourself out when you couldn't properly speak.

Maddie placed her fingers on my back, doing the same massaging motion Sonic had done my first night here to calm me down. It was soothing and seemed to help with the tight knot in my stomach, but not entirely. It still hurt, and that- accompanied by mild fever and pain brought on by my erupting teeth- left me feeling utterly miserable.

"I know..." Maddie whispered, "Life's so hard when you're little, huh...?"

Yes...Yes, it was.

Silver felt like the morning sun came far too soon, but an odd and yet... Vaguely familiar smell pulled him out of his deep slumber. The fact that he was still somewhat able to breathe as his eyes fluttered open was an improvement, but he winced at the light shining through the window, and he groaned as he pulled his blanket over his face.

What time was it? How long had he been asleep this time? He wasn't in the back seat of Miss Allison's vehicle anymore... He really needed to stop going to sleep in one place and waking up in another.

"Good morning, Silver..."
Miss Allison's voice was soft and chipper, *much* too chipper for early morning, Silver believed. His ear twitched as she gently stroked his shoulder with her hand, and then he pulled his head out from under the blanket and found she'd positioned herself to block the sun. "How'd you sleep?"

Silver took in a slightly wheezy breath, and then looked up at her. "...*Deep*." He muttered, "I don't remember getting here."

"That's what NyQuil does to ya." The woman giggled, "Feel any more like yourself?"

Silver nodded; his head still felt like it was inflated and he still ached, but he found to his relief that he could at least sit up on his own now. "Better... Not much, but better..."

"Good..."
Silver looked around the room he was in, finding it holding some items with which he was familiar, but in much better condition. He was on a couch, some wooden cabinets holding up some sort of machine with a black screen, and a tall lamp in the corner. "...Where's Blaze?" He asked, not seeing her in the room.

"She's taking a shower."

"A what...?" Silver rubbed his eyes, "You humans can just... *Command a rain shower*...?"

Allison grinned, "Eh... Sort of. We have a system that shoots water down from a pipe onto your head- kind of like a rain shower, but indoors. I wanted her to get some of that smoky smell off of her before she put on her new clothes."

Silver lifted his hand to his nose and tried to sniff himself, but his nose was still clogged. "...I don't smell anything."

"Well, that's because you're congested *and* used to the smell of smoke. No worries, though. It's not really bad, I promise."
She then held out a small package, some crackers inside of it. "You wanna try *eating something*?"

Silver nodded. He didn't really *feel* hungry, but he knew he hadn't eaten anything the day before, so he probably should at least *try* to eat something. He took the package from her and then noticed a small cup of water on the table in front of the couch, "Is that for me too?"

"Uh huh. Remember, you need to eat and drink slowly, okay?"

He nodded, and then sniffed again. "Miss Allison...? What's that smell? It's kind of sweet, but-"

"Oh, that's probably my raspberry tea." She informed, turning around and taking another cup from the table. "Here, sniff."

She held it a little closer and he inhaled, giving a nod as the scent got stronger. "Yes... That's it. I didn't know you could make tea with berries."

"You can make tea with a lot of different plants, but raspberry is my favorite."
She took a seat beside him, but his eyes had adjusted enough that the sun once more being in his face didn't bother him as much. "So once you finish there, do you feel like you could handle getting a shower yourself? I have a feeling it'll help dislodge some of that crud in your system."

Silver paused from sticking a cracker in his mouth, "...Are you subtly suggesting that I am giving off an odor you dislike, Miss Allison?"

The woman grinned, "Are you eloquently asking if you stink?"

The hedgehog smiled a bit and then placed the cracker into his mouth; maybe staying with this human wouldn't be so bad.

He was almost finished with the crackers and the sweet water when he heard footsteps on the hardwood and looked over.

Blaze stepped out of the hallway, her hands folded in front of her and her head dipped in embarrassment as she stood wearing a pink tunic, white leggings and her new sneakers.
"So...? How do I look?"

"*Fabulous,* young lady." Allison assured, "Does it makes you feel better to wear clothes without holes and that fit?"

Blaze nodded, "It does, actually. I've never had brand-new clothes before, it makes a difference."

"Told ya... Now come here, and I'll get those tangles out of your hair, huh?"

Blaze came over to her and took a seat on the couch beside her, turning the back of her head towards the woman while also looking at Silver. "How are you feeling, Silver?"

"Better..." Silver covered his mouth as he fought through a coughing fit, "...But not all the way."

"Better is good, though..."
She reached out and took his hand, squeezing it gently. "...I hate to admit it, but... I was worried you wouldn't make it...!"

"Being afraid when a loved one is sick is normal, Sweetheart... It's nothing to be ashamed of." Allison paused in her work to put a hand on Blaze's shoulder, "Even ladies can be afraid..."

Blaze smiled a little, and that made Silver smile too. He hadn't seen her smile much as they grew up; she always tried to be the serious one, the one who had to set an example even though there was no one else but him to show that example to.

After a few more minutes of quiet, Silver had finished his crackers and water, and Blaze's hair had been untangled and pulled up and out of her way. "There we are..." Allison hummed softly, and then turned to Silver. "What do you say, you wanna try?"

Silver didn't see what harm it would cause to try, so he gave a nod. It took him a moment to get untangled from the blanket tucked around him, and it was very cold out from under it, but he didn't quite as cold as he had before, so perhaps the medicine had worked.
He leaned against the wall for support as he followed her from the living room and down the hall, pausing at a door she opened. He felt the hot, moist air escape out as the door opened, sticking to his fur as he limped into the room.

"I'm gonna say we do this sitting down," Allison decided, and she pulled a curtain back to reveal a large, porcelain tub. "Climb on in,"

"Okay...?" Silver murmured curiously, and he took a seat on the bottom of the tub. She removed the wrappings around his hands and feet, and then took off Blaze's old tunic he was still wearing, leaving him completely exposed.

She ran her thumb over the top of his hand gently, "Your markings pulse in and out when you're asleep, you know... I guess it's part of your powers?"

Silver nodded slowly, "You know about my powers?"

"I know the little blue hedgehog that lives here in town too, so I figured that you probably could do something special too."
She then stood up and walked to the other end of the tub, pointing to a lever on the wall. "Okay, so this is how we turn on the water. The blue is cold water, and the red is hot water... This head is where the water comes from."

She pulled the head off of the wall and aimed the holes down at the ground in front of him, and then turned the lever. Almost immediately, the same clear, untainted water came rushing out and splashing onto the bottom of the tub. It didn't fill up however, the water running down a drain at the other end. "Alright... I want you to reach out and let me know when it's not too cold or too hot, okay?"

Silver nodded, holding his hand out as she allowed it to fall on his fingers. It took a moment or so, and the water was initially quite cold and sent shivers through his body, but finally it was at least tolerable. "There..." He whispered.

Allison nodded, and then pulled the head around and began to let the water fall onto his fur and quills. The warmth soaked into his fur, and he slumped a bit with a relaxed sigh. He watched as the water moving down towards the drain went from clear to a dirty gray color, bits of black speckled in it; was he really that dirty?

The water was coming out of the tiny holes hard enough to shove its way under his quills and fur, digging out dirt and ash he wasn't even aware of; it also massaged his aching muscles and relaxed him.
She then placed her hand over his face and sprayed the top of his head for a moment, minding his ears, before turning the head off. "Done already?" He murmured, almost disappointed it was over so quickly.

Allison smirked, "Not quite... I just don't want to waste water while I'm doing this next part." She grabbed a small piece of cloth and then wiped at the inside of his ears and his face very gently with it. She then grabbed a bottle of something, squirting some of it out onto her hands and then gently massaging it into his quills.

"What's this for?" He asked, finding that she'd been right; the hot, moist air was helping to clear up his nose.

"It's soap. It'll help get more of the ash and soot out of there..."

Once the soap had been thoroughly scrubbed in, the water was back on and washing it back out, and Silver watched the water run black once more. "Gee... I had no idea I was this

dirty..." He whispered.

"Had a feeling. You get used to a lot of things, and sometimes you don't even realize what it feels like to be clean, or out of pain, until that dirt and pain is gone."

She helped him to stand to get the last of the dirt and grime off of him, before once more turning off the water and grabbing a large, fluffy piece of fabric and wrapping it around him. The cold of his fever was back as he stepped out, but the fabric- despite not being very thick- was warm and cozy.

"Nothing feels much better than being clean... And look at that..."
She picked up a small mirror and handed it to him so that he could see his reflection. "Now *that* is what I call *silver*."

Silver smiled a bit; his fur had always been light gray, but she was right. Now that it was clean and clear of the soot and ash, it was truly like polished metal... It was truly silver.

"Alright now... Let's see if we can't find you some spare socks, and then we can all head out for the clinic. I have work to get done this morning."

Silver nodded slowly, "I suppose you do not trust us to be left on our own in your home."

"Once you two get all settled and I know you're not gonna accidentally *hurt* yourselves, then it'll be fine, but until then- it's *'Take-Your-Little-Alien-Guests-to-Work-Week...'"*

Chapter End Notes

The various worlds Obsidian saw are all tied to other AUs that I have created over the years... AUs that I have yet to figure out how to make into proper stories to post XD

Chapter 6: Dinner Prep Discussion

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After speeding through his reading assignment in English class, Sonic spent the last few minutes before the bell making a list. A list of all the places and things he'd have to show the newcomers once they had properly met the blue blur.

It wasn't in any particular order, but he figured that they would probably start at the closest things to the clinic and then branch out from there. He had to show them the ice cream shop, the baseball field, the town square where he totally should have a statue of himself placed. He'd saved Green Hills- Heck, he'd saved the *world- twice* already, so why shouldn't he get his own statue?

And then there were other little things, like the proper way to eat a chilidog, how to coax extra time to stay up in the evenings... So much these two would have to catch up on. Were they hedgehogs like him? How old were they? Were they closer to *his* age, or *Tails'*? So many questions left unanswered, but they would be soon.

He was so focused on the list as he walked out of class that he almost forgot to wait for Tails before heading home.

"Sonic, hold up!"

The young fox's voice snapped the hedgehog out of his daze, and he stopped to allow the fox to catch up. "Whoops. Sorry, Tails. My head was in the clouds."

"Yeah, I noticed." Tails chuckled, and then looked at the paper. "What's that?"

"I made a list of all the places I wanna show the new guys when we meet them on Friday! I could use some help coming up with ideas, though-"

"Guys? What makes you think they're not girls?"

Sonic paused, "...Okay, fair I guess, but so far there's only been us guys showing up!"

"*Kaia's a girl*!"

"Also fair, but most of town doesn't know that she's from our planet, so I'm not sure if she really counts."

"I'll have to tell her that next time she visits."

"Don't you dare."

The two walked a little bit more down the hall, and then out the doors of the school and started on their way down the street.

"Um... Sonic? Can I ask a question?"

"Sure thing, Buddy. What's up?"

"So... Mom said that we have to get shot at the clinic on Friday? Is it with a Nerf Gun or something? Cuz I don't-"

"Oh no no no, Tails." Sonic waved his hands, "No, we're not getting shot, we're getting *shots*."

"The difference being the number?"

Sonic rolled his eyes and then came to a full stop, "Look, shots is just another way of saying... *Injections*. Mom wants to stab us with needles and inject us with stuff that she *says* will keep us from getting sick, but I'm not *buying* it."

Tails' gripped the straps of his bag a little tighter, "Oh... I see... Are they big needles?"

"*Huge...!* And the thermometers she shoves up your butt are even *bigger*!"
He saw the fox's ears fold back and his tails curl up in between his legs. "Oh, but don't worry, Tails. I'll protect you! Just do what I do, and the whole thing will be a breeze!"

Tails seemed comforted a bit by his words; after all, his big brother was his hero, why wouldn't he take him at his word?

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Maddie hadn't been surprised when Allison had shown up a little late for work that morning, the young woman had just taken in two wayward teenagers that she had to figure out how to care for on top of getting ready for work in the morning.

When she arrived, she found that the biggest holdup had been her insistence on getting the two of them showered and clean; fair enough. It hadn't been hard apparently, simply a matter of helping Silver since he was still weak.

But as the two newcomers came in the back door, Maddie could see that something more than just dirt and ash had been removed from them; Blaze was smiling a bit, Silver was trying to walk on his own and insisting to Blaze that he was fine.
They were acting more like kids today, and not just lost animals that happened to be able to talk that had wandered into their clinic.

Silver had taken up a sleeping spot under the front lobby table, still not quite up for active interaction just yet. Despite the pets that came in that day- barking, meowing, and making all sorts of noises- the hedgehog was able to sleep soundly for hours at a time.
He learned quickly however, that sleeping under the desk meant keeping in mind the piece of wood that ran along the bottom between the legs of the desk; the first time he woke up, he sat right up into it, adding a headache to the list of symptoms for a little while... He was much more *careful* after that.

Blaze tried to keep herself busy doing work for them throughout the clinic; she opened new boxes of items and sorted them, she helped Allison check in the various patients, even took out the trash in the main office and front lobby. She insisted on being helpful to somehow repay them for their kindness- and Silver had offered to do the same once he could- despite the women's own insistence that repayment wasn't necessary, and they were happy to do it.

The day didn't wind up being too different than normal, aside from a tiny helper and another hidden under the desk.

When Maddie arrived at home, Tom was already pulling the items for dinner out of the fridge, and Knuckles was sitting on the floor, coloring with Obsidian, who still seemed to be in a grouchy mood. His teeth must still be bothering him... And she was certain Knuckles taking the crayons from him when tried to gnaw on them wasn't helping things.
As much as Sonic gushed over his fellow hedgehog, it was quite clear that out of all of this brothers, Knuckles was the one Obsidian loved the most.

"Welcome back, Mother." Knuckles greeted with a wave, "Was your work productive today?"

"Of course." Maddie affirmed, leaning into the kiss Tom planted on her cheek. "It's nice to be home, though..."

She took the carrots from her husband and then pulled out a cutting board and got to work, it would take a little bit of time for soup to be finished, so she needed to get started now.

A few minutes passed and the door opened again, revealing two more household members trudging in and dropping their bags at the door. "How was school, boys?"

"Fine..." Sonic mumbled, plopping down at the kitchen table and resting his head on the wood. "...Long."

"And what about *you,* Tails?"

Tails was quiet for a moment, "...It was okay."

Maddie could feel he was upset by something, but she didn't want to rush him; he'd tell her when he felt comfortable.

Tails stood in the doorway to the kitchen while Knuckles got up from the floor and then wandered in with Obsidian on his hip. Finally, the fox spoke up. "Mom...?"

Maddie paused from her cutting as she heard the little fox whimper, "What's the matter, Sweetie?"

Tails held his tails in his hands, squeezing them tightly. "...Do we *have* to get shots on Friday?"

"Well... Yes."
She placed the knife down and walked over to the fox, putting a hand on his cheek. "But it'll be okay. It's just to make sure you won't get sick. Your dad got one right before he and I went to Hawaii and you and Knuckles got here-"

"Yup!" Tom announced, "And look at the strapping specimen I am *now!*"

Maddie rolled her eyes and then turned back to her son, "Since you and Knuckles aren't from here, you might catch these illnesses and they'll be *worse* than it is for us humans, so I want to try to make sure that you don't catch it *at all*. You nervous?"

Tails nodded, "Sonic said that-"

"Well, don't listen to Sonic." She placed a hand on his shoulder and squeezed it gently, "Sonic knows a lot, but he doesn't know *everything*."

"Has *he* gotten shots before?"

"Yes, he has..."
She turned to look at the blue hedgehog trying to act innocent in his chair, "And whatever he told you is most likely an *incredibly overdramaticized* version of how it went."

Sonic wouldn't make eye contact with her, "Only the honest truth, Mom!" He assured.

"Mmmhmm... Sure."

"I am certain it will not be as bad as the hedgehog has told you," Knuckles affirmed, "I do not believe that Mother would ever harm us intentionally. This will be my first experience as well, so if it will ease your worries, I will volunteer to go first, and then tell you how my experience went."

Tails' ears perked up a bit, "You would do that for me?"

Knuckles pounded his chest, "Bravery comes from within, but possessing knowledge of what you are getting into can help bring that bravery to the surface."

Tails smiled, "Thanks, Knuckles. That helps me a lot."

"Wouldn't bravery be to go rushing in without any information?" Sonic asked.

"No. *That* would be *foolishness*." Knuckles gave the hedgehog a smirk, "Something *you* are quite good at demonstrating, Hedgehog."

"Oh yeah!?"

"Stop." Maddie stated firmly before Sonic could launch himself across the table at the echidna, "Dinner will be done soon, and the last thing we need is a busted table."

The hedgehog settled down with a pout, glaring a bit at the echidna, but it quickly changed when Knuckles spoke again.

"You should be made aware that Obsidian attempted to speak your name today, Hedgehog."

"He what!?"
Sonic zipped around to the little hedgehog, "*You did?* You said my name, Obbie...!? Say it

again, say Sonic! Come on, say Sonic!"

Obsidian just stared at him for several seconds, and then opened his mouth, sending drool plummeting from his mouth and onto the hedgehog's shoe.

"Ah! Oh, gross, Obbie! Why do you *do* that?"
He rushed over and grabbed a paper towel, wiping the goop from his shoe.

"What?" Tom asked.

"He just dropped a glob of spit onto my shoe!"

Maddie grinned, "Babies are just like that sometimes, and because he's getting teeth, he's making a lot more spit than normal."

"I know, but he only does it to *me!* It's like he just holds it in his mouth until I'm in range."

Knuckles smirked, "But he has yet to *vomit* on you. That is solely *my* medal of honor."

"And *I'm* the holder of the medal for losing a shirt to a full-on blowout." Tom alerted, "Thankfully it wasn't one of my favorites, but I still had to bathe him afterward."

"Alright, enough about poop and puke and spit." Maddie remarked, "We are making dinner and will soon be eating dinner."

Sonic looked back at the toddler, starting back up on what he'd previously been doing. "Come on, Obbie... Say Sonic."

Still nothing.

Chapter End Notes

Sonic, stop traumatizing your brother.

Chapter 7: A Trip to Mom's Day Job

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Good morning, Wachowskis!" Allison greeted, "What brings everyone into the office today?"

"*Shots*." Sonic grumbled as he led the way into the front lobby, "Big, pointy needles that go right *through* you!"

"*Stop it.*" Tom informed, "You're only gonna make Tails *more* nervous."

"Not to worry, Tails." Maddie assured as she came out of the back, "It's not as bad as it sounds- or as bad as your brother *makes it sound*...!"

They then turned as a little lilac cat appeared from behind the desk, wearing a pink tunic with tulle flowers on the front, white leggings and little white and pink shoes. "*And* it's not a *frequent* requirement. Isn't that right, Miss Maddie?"

"Right." Maddie replied with a smile, "Boys, this is Blaze. She's one of the newcomers who's been staying with Allison."

"*Told ya* one of them might be a girl...!" Tails whispered, elbowing the hedgehog gently in the ribs.

Sonic elbowed his little brother right back, "Hi! I'm Sonic, and this is Tails, and..."
Tails waved, but Knuckles was just staring at the cat, eyes wide. "Uh... *Knuckles?* You good, man?"

The echidna shook out of his stare, his cheeks suddenly turning pink. "Forgive me. Our mother did not inform me that one of the new arrivals was..."

"What?" Blaze frowned in disappointment, "A *girl*?"

Knuckles quickly regained his composure, and then gave a bow. "Actually, I was going to say *'Beautiful.'* I was simply distracted by your elegance for a moment, Miss Blaze. Please forgive me..."

Blaze gave a little gasp and then ducked behind Allison with a giggle. "Oh... Thank you, Mr. Knuckles."

"Oh no..." Sonic whispered in horror, especially once he saw his mother's giddy grin. "*Mom!*"

Knuckles then placed a hand over his chest. "I am Knuckles, last of the Echidna Tribe and the greatest warrior in the galaxy. And *you are*?"

The cat came back out and gave a curtsy, "Blaze, last descendant of the House of Sol."

Knuckles took her hand very gently, "My lady."

Blaze giggled again, and Sonic looked at his mom again, who was still grinning. "Mom, don't tell me you think this is *funny.*"

"No, Sonic..." Maddie murmured, "...It's *sweet.*"

The hedgehog gave a grossed-out look, and Tails seemed a bit perplexed by his older brothers' behavior. Knuckles was only being *slightly* more formal and polite than he *normally* was, and Sonic seemed *upset* by that for some reason...

"And *this*..." Tom pulled the tiny hedgehog out of his tiny carrier as he remembered he hadn't introduced him yet, "...Is Obsidian."

"He's the youngest!" Tails informed, "Though... I guess that's *obvious*."

Blaze smiled, waving at Obsidian. "Hello, Obsidian..."

Obsidian whimpered, his bottom lip sticking out as he looked like he was about to cry.

Tom turned him around and held him close as soon as he noticed, "It's okay, little guy...! She's not gonna hurt you...!" He comforted as Obsidian's claws dug into his shirt. "It's okay..."

Sonic shrugged, "Don't take it personally Blaze, he did the same thing when he met our *grandma*. I think he's just easily scared by new people, he'll get used to you."

Blaze nodded, looking back at the little hedgehog who now seemed to be actively *trying* not to look at her.

"Alright, boys." Tom encouraged, "Let's not take up the entire hallway here. Still sticking to the plan? You first, Knux?"

Knuckles gave a firm nod, "The order is still in motion." He gave a slight bow to the cat again, "A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Miss Blaze."

"The same to you, Warrior Knuckles." Blaze replied, watching the echidna follow his mother into the hall beyond the lobby before climbing up into the spare chair behind the counter. "Now, where *were* we, Miss Allison?"

"Florida."

Blaze nodded, looking at a map that had been pinned to a piece of cardboard. "Mmm... It is southeast, yes?"

"Correct."

"What're you *doing*?" Sonic asked as he looked over the counter.

Blaze held up the map, "Miss Allison is helping me learn all fifty states of this country. I thought it important to familiarize myself with as much about it as I can."

Allison grinned, "She's quite interested in the political history and geography... Silver's more on science so far."

"Silver?"

She pointed in one of the other corners, and they saw another hedgehog curled up on the floor under the counter asleep, a blanket wrapped around him and another blanket rolled up to act as a pillow. "He's still getting over the flu, so he's been zonked out on NyQuil all morning. He's barely rolled over since he settled under there two hours ago."

"*Still?* You sure he's not *dead*?" Sonic asked.

Blaze frowned, her fur sticking up a bit. "Miss Allison would *never* allow such a thing to happen. She is quite confident he will fully recover within a few days."

"Right." Allison patted the cat's leg, "He's already doing much better."

"It's like what your mom said the other night," Tom informed, "Some human illnesses might affect you guys *worse* than it does *us*, so it's taking Silver longer to get over it."

"So..." Tails perked up, "Do *you* have any cool powers, Blaze?"

Blaze was quiet for a moment, her ears drooping a bit as she folded her hands together. "I... No, not really."

"That's okay, I don't either. I can just build stuff."

"You can fly with your tails, Tails." Sonic reminded, "*That's* pretty cool."

"Well, yeah, but... That's not as cool as what *you* and *Knuckles* can do. What about *Silver*?"

Blaze's ears perked up again and she gave a smile, "He does indeed, but I will not spoil the surprise and will allow him to properly demonstrate when he has returned to full strength. It would *rude* to relinquish him of that."

Sonic rolled his eyes as he took a seat beside Tom in a chair, "Oh great. Another one who speaks in fancy..." He mumbled.

Tom removed his ball cap to gently smack the hedgehog on the top of the head, causing Obsidian to giggle. "Hey, be nice. You've got plenty of things weird about *you too*."

"I didn't *say* it was weird."

"Your *tone* did, and that's just as *important.*"

Sonic frowned, slumping a bit in his seat as Tails came around the counter.

"So, how many states have you identified?" The fox asked.
He and Blaze spent the next few minutes working together on the map, with Tails helping her and answering the occasional question or providing little facts about a state. She did seem

quite interested in the subject, asking Tails to elaborate on some of the facts, which the fox was happy to do.

A few minutes later, Knuckles returned with Maddie, replacing Sonic in the chair as the hedgehog begrudgingly walked back towards the hall.
"Off to the gallows...!" He whined with a sad face to Tails.

"Come on, you drama queen." Maddie muttered as she dragged her middle son away.

Knuckles puffed up his chest, "Fear not, Tails. It was nowhere *near* the torture the hedgehog has been alluding to."

Tails gave his oldest brother a smile, but he still looked nervous. Both he and Blaze looked down as Silver shifted position, and then the hedgehog's eyes opened.

"Watch the crossbeam." Allison warned as he sat up, and the hedgehog tilted his head to avoid hitting it on the piece of wood between the legs of the desk; he must've already hit his head on it once.

The hedgehog moaned, blinking and wincing at the light coming from above. "H-How long was I asleep this time...?" He croaked.

"About two hours." Allison informed, "You want something to eat?"

Silver looked at her wearily for a moment, and then nodded.

"Okay. I've got some crackers in the drawer here-"

Knuckles had not been present when the others saw Silver under the desk, so he came around to investigate the voice coming from there. "Greetings." He responded.

It was about this time that Silver woke up enough to notice Knuckles and Tails there, his eyes widening a bit. "...You... You guys are like *us*... I-I mean I knew about the other blue hedgehog, but-"

"We get it." Tails responded with a smile as he came over, "My name's Tails, and this is my brother, Knuckles. Our other brother, Sonic-"

"The blue one." Knuckles added.

"Right, he's in the back getting shots, and then our dad and little brother, Obsidian, are on the other side of the counter."

"Hey there, Silver." Tom called softly.

Silver looked back and forth between them, as if he couldn't believe what he was seeing. "...Wow..." He whispered, and then he took the tiny package of crackers from Allison. "Oh... Thank you, Miss Allison."

"No problem... You feeling any better?"

"In comparison to when we first *got* here, yes, but compared to this morning...Not really. Still coughing and my nose is still a little... *Congested* is the word *you* used."

"I'm sorry, kiddo... At least the Nyquil's helping you sleep."

Silver nodded slowly, pulling the package open and slipping a cracker into his mouth. "I haven't slept like this in a long time..."
He didn't seem to want to talk much, just sat there quietly nibbling on the cracker; but then again, it may just be that he wasn't feeling well.

They heard a commotion coming from the back, and Tails had to wonder if Sonic was actually putting up a *fight* over the injections. He could hear his mom giving exasperated sounds, and then it was followed by the loud slamming of a heavy door, and Sonic's muffled shouts.

"What the heck is going on back there?" Tom asked curiously.

Allison tilted her head with a thoughtful look towards the hall, "Hmm. Sounded like the door to the kennels."

There was a few seconds of Sonic's faint voice, and then they heard the door open and close again, and when Maddie returned a moment later, Sonic was quietly following her with a guilty look. "What happened?"

"Mom didn't appreciate my joke..." Sonic mumbled, taking a seat beside Tom.

Maddie rolled her eyes, "He was being over dramatic and playing dead, so I put him in Time-Out for a few seconds."

Sonic scrubbed at his face, "I thought she was gonna *leave* me there...!"

"Hey, if you hadn't been so dedicated to your act, then you would have known what was going on and been able to get out of there before I even closed the door, so really, if *anyone's* to blame, it's *you*."

Sonic pouted, but the glint of humor in his eyes told them that he wasn't *that* mad at his mom.

The woman then turned to Tails, "Alright, Sweetie. It's your turn... Good morning, Silver."

"Morning, Miss Maddie..." Silver hummed.

Sonic suddenly zipped over, leaning over the counter to look at the other hedgehog with a grin. "Hey! Other hedgehog!"

Silver's eyes were wide as he stared back at the other hedgehog, "...Hi? You're really *fast*, you know that?"

Knuckles rolled his eyes, "Young Silver, you have no idea..."

Tails took his mom's hand, waving to the others as he followed her behind the dutch doors and then into the hallway. They entered a different room, with pastel wallpaper and colorful posters of puppies and kittens on them. "Did you *really* lock Sonic up?"

"Only for a second, but yes, I did. He was making it a bigger deal than it needed to be, and I didn't want him making you *more* stressed out."
She picked him up and placed him on the table, "Would it make you less scared if I show it to you first?"

Tails twiddled his thumbs, but then nodded. "This is just the arm, right? Not anywhere else?"

"Baby, if you think I'm going to shoot a needle up your butt, then the answer is no." Maddie giggled, "Look here, this is all it is. A tiny little needle, you won't even hardly feel it and it doesn't even go all the way in."

Tails looked at the needle for a moment, and then nodded. "And this will keep me from getting sick?"

"Yup. At least from the diseases that are the most dangerous. You may still get the occasional virus, but we won't have to worry about rabies or something like that."

"Will Obsidian get shots too?"

"Eventually. You enjoy having him around?"

Tails grinned, "Of course I am! I've never had a little brother before, and for the most part, he's pretty happy! I mean sure, he's been stealing my stuff lately, but I'm sure he doesn't mean anything by it, he's just curious!"

"Uh huh... Done."

"*Done*?"
Tails looked down at his arm, raising a brow. "You did it so fast and I didn't even *feel* it!"

"Exactly. See what I mean about Sonic making a big deal over nothing?"

Tails nodded, hopping off of the table. He took her hand again, letting her take him back out to the front lobby, where they heard Sonic chattering away.

"Come on, gimme a hint!" The hedgehog was on the counter, leaned over the side to talk to Silver, who was lying down again and looking up at him.

"No."

"Please!?"

"No."

"Pleeeeeeease? What if I said *'Pretty Please With a Cherry on Top Covered in a Banana Sundae?'*"

"Well, since you put it like *that*... No."

"Gah! You're so *boring*!"

"What is going on *here*?" Maddie asked.

"Your son is trying to get Silver to show him his *'super cool amazing powers.'*" Allison informed, "It's not going so well for him."

"Sonic, leave him alone." Tails complained, "He's still sick, after all. How would *you* feel if *I* kept bothering you when *you* didn't feel well?"

"And get off the counter, it's not a sitting area." Maddie reprimanded.

Sonic grumbled, but did as she asked.

Tails looked over to his dad and littlest brother; Obsidian was still clinging to his dad's shirt and not looking in their direction. He seemed really uncomfortable, maybe he thought he was next.
He walked over and stroked the toddler's back, "No worries, Obbie. You won't be getting any shots today. We're gonna head back home now, right?"

Tom smirked, "Yup." He got up and walked around to Maddie, giving her a peck on the cheek. "See you back at the house, Babe."

"Bye, Babe." Maddie returned, and then bent down and accepted hugs from each of her boys and then planted a quick peck on Obsidian's head. "See you all later, boys..."

"Bye, Mom!"
Tails gave her one last hug and then they all hurried back out the front door, headed for the truck. "I hope Silver and Blaze can get settled in like we did! It'll be nice to have some more friends."

"Yeah..." Sonic smirked, "...Once Silver stops being a *buzzkill*- OW!"
Tom smacked the hedgehog on the head with his hat again, and Obsidian burst into giggles. "Oh, you think that's *funny*, huh!?"

"He does indeed." Knuckles assured, giving a look to Obsidian as if he was fully confident that he was right.

"Nuk!" Obsidian squealed.

"Oh, sure... You'll say *his* name, but *mine*-"

Chapter End Notes

And there you have it! The kids have all been introduced to one another! Though Silver and Obsidian have yet to actually *see* each other, being on opposite sides of the counter and all...

Chapter 8: Home Invasion

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A few days had passed since we met Silver and Blaze, and while they hadn't shown any signs of knowing who I was or what I'd done, those thoughts still spun in my head like a swirling snowstorm.

Sonic, Tails, and Knuckles hadn't known anything about me and still didn't, why would these two mysteriously come in here with that knowledge? It made no sense to worry, but I couldn't think of much else.

The dreams of other worlds had persisted as well; why? Why was I being shown these things? What purpose did showing me another world serve other than to remind me of my old life?

It was late afternoon, Sonic and Tails had just walked into the house, and Maddie was home early. Knuckles was trying to finish a puzzle on the coffee table, watching me very closely to make sure I didn't eat any of the pieces.
The echidna's behavior hadn't changed much, but there was something settled in his head; I could see it, his encounter with the pair had him thinking... It had *me* thinking *too.*

My head was hurting on top of everything else that afternoon, which left me in less than a happy mood. It didn't help when Sonic came up to me and tried to get me to say his name again.

"Come on, Obbie..." He cooed desperately, "*Just once?* Do it for *me*...?"

It wasn't that I *couldn't*, but I had to do *something* to bug him; it was required in the little brother handbook.

"Come on, just once?"

Then the doorbell rang.

"*I've* got it!" Tails hollered, getting up from the couch where he'd been doing homework and heading towards the front door. I continued to lay on the floor, fiddling with Ducky until then Tails spoke again, and his voice shivered with fear.
"Um... *Mom*...!?" He called.

"What is it, Tails?" Maddie came out of the hall and started towards the door, I could see who was at the door, but the way she stopped and went very still was not a good sign.

I heard a man's voice speak; not one that I knew, and Maddie made a very quick look towards us. Sonic's eyes widened in horror and he looked to Knuckles, who looked just as frightened. Who was it? What was going on?

Sonic bent down over me, "What do we *do*...!?" He whispered, "If I try to run and *hide* him-"

Knuckles slowly moved down from the couch and then moved so that the two of them were blocking me from view. "Stay very quiet and still, Obsidian." Knuckles whispered, "Try to warp to a hiding place if you *can*."

I wished it was that easy; I knew I *could* warp away through shadows, but it wasn't quite something I had *control* over just yet. I pulled Ducky closer to me, ducking lower behind them. Whoever was at the door, they were afraid of them *seeing* me... And that frightened me.

The man's voice grew louder, and then I heard multiple footsteps as they entered the house; Maddie was arguing with them about something, but I didn't know what. My heart was racing, my head still pounding, it was hard to focus and try to make sense of what was being said.
The thud of boots, the informal tone, and the clinking of metal clips on their clothes; I knew those sounds... These were soldiers.

These were officers of the government.

I slumped lower against the rug, and then a piece of fuzz sticking out of the rug brushed my nose.
Oh no... No no no-

"-Choo!"

Sonic hadn't been having the best luck getting Obsidian to say his name, and he almost felt like the little hedgehog was doing it on purpose. "Come on, Obbie... Just once?"

Tails had gone to answer the door, but then his voice had sent alarms blaring in his head, and he sat up to see Commander Walters at the door, followed by other officers. "Oh no...!"

Knuckles saw it too, and he looked back at the two of them. Their mom walked by and started into a *'discussion'* with the man about how they were supposed to call before they just showed up.

"If we gave you a heads up, then you might be able to hide anything suspicious, Mrs. Wachowski." Commander Walters informed, "We're here on the matter of a recent spike in... *Unusual energy activity*."

Sonic placed himself in front of Obsidian as Knuckles got down on the floor and did the same on the other side. "What do we *do*?" He whispered, "If I try to run and *hide* him-"

Knuckles didn't look behind them but did lean a little closer, "Stay very quiet and still, Obsidian." he whispered to the toddler, "Try to warp to a hiding place if you *can*."

Sonic felt Obsidian duck down a little bit against him behind him, and the two brothers tried to act natural as Commander Walters and two more officers came into the house.

"What *kind* of unusual activity?" Their mom asked with her own suspicious look.

Sonic tried to think over the last few weeks; the cause could be any number of things. His nightmare, Silver and Blaze's arrival, Kaia's mental breakdown in the house after finding out the Echidnas lost the Master Emerald... *Any* of those could have made a blip on their radar.

But then he felt Obsidian stiffen, his breathing hitching. Was he about to cry? He hoped not. If Obsidian really understood as much as Knuckles had been implying, then he must know how important it is to stay-

"-Choo!"

No, he'd been trying to fight off a *sneeze*. Not as controllable, but just as bad when it came to noise.

The adults' argument came to a halt, and Sonic rubbed his nose. "Sorry, allergies." He lied with a sniffle.

Commander Walters frowned, and then looked to the side in the kitchen. "...The *highchair's new*, Mrs. Wachowski."

"We've had it for a long time," their mom admitted, "It was my sister's."

"I see..."
He looked around the space, his brows furrowing deeper.

He was right; if they'd known he was coming, they *would* have hidden everything of Obsidian's away and out of sight, but now, there was too much evidence lying around. The high chair in the kitchen, the bottles drying by the sink, the recently-used burp rag draped over the arm of the couch.

"An awful lot of infant items for someone whose youngest is eight years old and her niece is twelve, Mrs. Wachowski..."

Maddie's own brows furrowed; she couldn't lie to them about it, not now. "...He arrived *before* you said not to take any more in, so *technically*-"

"And you did not alert us to his arrival."

"Where in those papers we signed did it say we had to tell you the moment any *others* showed up? Besides, he's only a *baby*!"

Sonic reached back and grabbed Obsidian, pulling him up into his arms and curling around him in a protective position. Obsidian was shaking, and Sonic placed a hand on his back to try to comfort him. "He won't hurt anything." He insisted, "All he does is eat, sleep and poop!"

The moment Commander Walters' eyes fell on the little hedgehog, Sonic saw something shift in his gaze. The anger in his eyes remained, but it was also accompanied by something else... *Fear?* Perhaps *confusion?* It was hard to read humans sometimes, but it was almost like the man had seen the infant *before*.

"Where did you find him?" He asked firmly.

"At one of the local farms." Knuckles informed, getting closer to the toddler to assist in protecting him. "As a newborn, presumably left by his mother."

The next few moments watched the tension in the room explode.
Before Sonic even knew what was going on, there were two clicks and Sonic yelped as he felt something strike him in the shoulder, and a yelp from Knuckles told him that the echidna had been struck as well. He looked to see a familiar red projectile sticking out of his arm- a tranquilizer dart- and then the other two officers had grabbed Tails and their mom, holding them back.

"Walters, have you lost your mind!?" Maddie exclaimed, fighting to get loose.

Sonic was beginning to teeter, his limbs growing numb and slack. He tried hard to hold onto Obsidian, but then he was pushed over onto the floor and his littlest brother taken from his arms. "N-No...!" He rasped, hearing Knuckles also trying to get up and defend the little one. "L-Leave him alone...!"

Obsidian was squirming in Walters' arms as Sonic's vision started to go dark, and then he saw purple sparks flicker across the little hedgehog's quills, and the whites of his eyes go blood red.

"*NO!*" was the last thing Sonic heard before everything went dark and silent.

—

"Walters, have you lost your mind!?"
Maddie struggled to get loose from the man holding her back, watching the alertness fading from Sonic and Knuckles' faces as they tried to get up and get away.

"Leave him alone!" Tails cried, "Please! He won't hurt anyone!"

The man holding Tails loosened his grip just a bit, "Sorry, Kiddo..." He hissed softly and almost sympathetically, "It's just my job... Sir, is this *really*-"

"*These two* can *barely* keep their powers and emotional outbursts under control as *teenagers*." Commander Walters walked over and nudged Sonic, who promptly fell over onto his side. The blue hedgehog looked up desperately as Obsidian was taken from his arms, the little toddler giving soft cries and trying to get loose and back to him. "What control is an *infant* going to have?"

"No... Leave him... Alone...!" Sonic whimpered, "Leave..."
His eyes rolled back, his body going fully limp on the floor.

Maddie then saw purple sparks radiating off of Obsidian's quills, and he looked back at Walters with an terrified expression and the whites of his eyes a bright red.
"*NO!*" He screamed, and then the house became swallowed in darkness. A thick mist swirled out of seemingly nowhere, surrounding them and making them lose track of the house itself.

"What!?" Walters looked around, and then Maddie gasped as he dropped the toddler. Obsidian freefell for a moment, but the mist seemed to cushion his fall before he sank through it and disappeared into the mist. "Fall back!"

But there was nowhere to fall back *to*. The house was gone, all that was around them was the mist, and then the ground under them shuddered, and lifted up and out of the mist. An old platform of stones, like portions of an old road or courtyard, with twisted iron fencing and large cracks running through it. They got the feeling that they were high up in the air, but *how high* was uncertain, and nobody dared jump to find out.

This weird event had the soldiers distracted enough that Maddie was able to snap loose from her captor's grip. The cracks in their platform were getting bigger, and while she'd lost track of Obsidian, she could see little pieces of the platform that broke away would float away and disappear into the mist... and there were cracks between her and her older two boys.

Tails seemed to notice the same thing, and he pulled himself loose as well. Both of them booked it towards their family members. Tails got to Knuckles first, and then the chunk ripped away, floating away. "Mom!"

"Stay with him, Tails!" Maddie called as she grabbed Sonic and the same thing happened. "We'll *find* you!"

"Yes, Ma'am!"

The fox and echidna disappeared into the mist, and Maddie heard the officers' voices calling for her, but she ignored them. She grabbed Sonic and held him close, feeling his slow heartbeat against her pounding one. The hedgehog's head rested on her shoulder, a light blue aura forming around him and pulsing a little brighter whenever he took in a breath... Much like the pulsing of Silver's markings. Had Sonic always given off this aura and she just never noticed?

Their little chunk of solid ground floated almost silently through the dark, sparkling mists, until it suddenly came to a stop, and she watched the ground go from hard stone to smooth concrete, and the mist folded back a bit to reveal metal walls and doors marked with combinations of numbers and letters.

It looked like some sort of facility, and she looked up to see security cameras- *dozens* of them- looking this way and that. Where were they? Had anyone seen them arrive?

Maddie waited a moment, and when she heard nobody coming, she adjusted her grip on Sonic and got up to her feet. The mist lingered on the edges, which made her wonder if this place was really real or just some sort of illusion, but either way, she had to find a way out and back to her boys- she'd promised Tails she would.

Sonic moaned a bit in his drugged sleep, nuzzling his head into the crook of her neck a little.

"It's okay, Sonic..." She whispered, "...We're gonna be fine, let's go see if we can find someone to help us out..."

Unfortunately, if she was in some government base, she had no idea how she was going to explain why she was carrying an unconscious, blue, alien hedgehog around.

Chapter End Notes

...And we were doing *so good...!*

Chapter 9: Locked In and Locked Out

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tails was both intrigued and terrified by the events. Obsidian had either transported them to another plane of existence, or forged an elaborate illusion. Tails had a feeling it was the former- after all, Obsidian was too little to create something this elaborate in his head and then project it into visual form... Right?

He had to admit, the way Obsidian had looked at Walters before the mist appeared had looked like he knew *exactly* what he was doing...

He'd hoped that they would all stay together, but then the chunk he and Knuckles were on had pulled away into the mist and he lost sight of his mom and Sonic.
He couldn't risk flying out in search of them; Knuckles was rather heavy to haul even when he *wasn't* unconscious and dead weight, and if he got himself lost in the mist, he might never find another chunk of solid ground. He did not want to find out how far down the bottom of this place was by wearing out and falling to it.

So he stayed with Knuckles as they floated through the mist- just like his mom had told him- until suddenly the chunk hit something and gave a hard shudder. Tails fell onto the ground, and then watched the stone turn to carpet and the mist folded back to reveal a corridor of metal walls and massive windows looking out at a night sky... Wait.

Tails got up and went to the window, pressing his hands against the glass with wide eyes. It wasn't just the night sky, stars surrounded him on all sides- even down- and outside of where they were was a planet, slowly turning, slowly moving.
"We're in *space*...!" He whispered, "This is a space station!"

Tails had always wanted to go into space- in a ship, of course- but that wasn't something he'd ever thought would be possible. He'd traveled the galaxy by ring, hopping from planet's surface to planet's surface in search of Sonic, but this... this was quite different. Was Earth the planet below them, or were they orbiting another world much like it?

He looked back to Knuckles as the echidna moaned in his drugged sleep, and the fox's ears pricked as he heard footsteps coming down the corridor.
They weren't supposed to be here, they needed to find somewhere to hide.

Little bits of the mist lingered in corners and seams, but Tails figured that he should be able to use doors in this place. He saw one partially open, and he grabbed Knuckles under the arms and dragged him across the floor. He pushed the door open and pulled his brother inside what appeared to be a broom closet and closed the door once more, leaving a small crack so he could see.

Humans in lab coats walked past- a good sign that the planet below was Earth- murmuring things amongst themselves. Their forms seemed partially translucent and their voices distant-

they must not be real *either*- But one bit of dialogue caught the fox's attention...

"...You really think Robotnik's little experiment is actually going to solve the world's problems?"

"Eh... I think he just wanted to make his granddaughter a friend..."

Tails' ears pricked up in interest; Robotnik had a granddaughter? Robotnik had kids who had kids? Where had he gotten kids? Had he kidnapped kids long ago?

No... No. He was getting ahead of himself, this was probably some other guy with the same name; it made no sense for their arch-enemy to have settled down with anyone- except maybe with that fanboy of his, but two men couldn't procreate... Right?

Tails shoved that thought out of his head before it could pull him any further down that rabbit hole.

The humans were gone, but he wasn't sure if dragging Knuckles around the halls of this place was the best option. He settled down beside the echidna, waiting for the echidna to regain his senses.

It didn't take too long, but when he awoke, he was already swinging.
"Hey, whoa!" Tails put a hand on Knuckles' shoulder as the echidna's fur sparked red and he swung at him. "Knuckles, it's *me!* It's *me!*" He wailed.

The echidna paused, his eyes searching the dark space before finding the fox ducked behind him. "...Tails."
The next moment, Tails was in Knuckles' arms, which was a welcome change from being punched at. "Are you harmed? Did they hurt you as well?"

"N-No, no. I'm okay...!" Tails huffed, hugging the echidna back. "What about *you*?"

"I am... Still a little disoriented, but otherwise alright."
He looked around the space, "Where are we? Has Walters taken all of us hostage?" He gasped, "Obsidian! Did he take-"

"Slow down. We're fine... Sort of."
Tails pulled the door open a bit more to let some more light in. "Obsidian did... *Something.* I think he's sent us to some other plane, or perhaps another time, but we were all separated. You and I, we're on a space station of some sort... And I heard some guy mention Robotnik- but it might not be *that Robotnik*!"

"What is our plan, then?"

"I don't know... We need to figure out where we are and what's going on, but I wanted to wait until you were awake because...well-"

"You did not wish to leave me unconscious in a broom closet."

"...Precisely."
Tails pulled the door open a bit more and peered out, "...The coast is clear. Come on..."

The two brothers crawled out of the dark room and into the hall once more. "...Okay, we need to pick a direction."

"Left." Knuckles determined, and then he grasped Tails' hand gently, "Come, Fox. The sooner we uncover where we are, the sooner we can rescue our family members from Commander Walters' clutches..."

The day at Green Hills had been a characteristically slow one- at least, slow for a day following Sonic's proper introduction to the town. A few traffic violations, and one noise disturbance call by the neighbors of some teens who were starting their own band; *Smash 30,* they called themselves.

Tom was actually rather bored and considering finishing up early and going home; his wife had done the same a little while ago, maybe they could have a family night and just hang out for once.

Then the phone rang.

Wade got up from his chair and picked up the phone, "Green Hills Police Department," He murmured, "How can I... Whoa whoa whoa, slow down, Al!"

Tom looked up from his desk with concern; there was only one person that Wade called Al, and that was Allison; he'd called her that since they were much younger. What could have happened at the clinic that she'd call the emergency line directly?

"...Yeah, he's here. Just hold on a second."
Wade looked up from the phone, "It's Allison, she wants to talk to you, Tom."

Tom hurried over and collected the phone from his deputy, "This is Tom." He informed as calmly as he could.

Tom, it's Allison. I really think you should go check on your house.

"What? Why?"

Maddie left her lunchbox here when she left early this afternoon, and so I tried to call so that she could send Sonic to come collect it, but I called your house phone multiple times and her cell multiple times and nobody is answering. There's four people at that house that could pick up the phone, Tom. There's *no way* they wouldn't answer unless something's going on.

Tom nodded firmly, "Right. Thanks, Allison. I'll head over there immediately."

Be careful, Sheriff.

"Always."
He hung up the phone and then went to grab his coat, "I gotta go, Wade. Something's going on at the house."

"Right. I'll keep an eye on things, no problem."

"Right. Hopefully it's nothing serious and I'll be back soon."
He ran to his truck and opened the door, his eyes widening as he saw two small aliens sitting in the passenger seat and on the floor. "What the-! What are you two doing here? Does Allison know?"

Blaze and Silver nodded, and then the little cat spoke. "I left her an extensive note. We are concerned about your family as well, Mr. Tom."

Silver nodded, "I saw some big, black vehicles move through town earlier, and I can't tell you exactly how, but I sensed something... *Not good* from them."

Tom frowned, and then climbed into the driver's seat and started the engine. "Alright, but you two have to listen to me and do what I tell you, alright?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Good. First, get up here in the seat and strap yourselves in. I'm not letting kids ride in my truck without proper safety measures."

Silver climbed up into the seat next to Blaze and then latched the seatbelt over both of them. "Secured!"

"Good, now hold on!"
Tom checked the road for pedestrians and hazards, and then pulled out and started down the road. He hoped he was wrong, he hoped that it was just that they forgot to pay the phone bill and everything at home was fine...

But as Tom pulled up to his house, he could see the GUN vehicles in the drive, and his heart sunk into his stomach. "Stay hidden in the truck, you two." He ordered Silver and Blaze, and then he threw the truck into park and jumped out, running towards the house.
He came to a sudden stop however, nearly falling backwards onto the gravel as he saw the massive cloud of dark purple smoke engulfing the house. "What the hell...? What did you *do!?*" He demanded.

"Sheriff Wachowski-" One of the officers started, but was met with Tom's face in his as the father grabbed his shirt firmly in both hands.

"Answer the damn question! What happened here? Where are my wife and boys!? What did you-"

"It wasn't *us!*" Another argued, "There was an infant crying in the home and-"

Tom's eyes widened, and then he rushed towards where the front steps would be, but found to his shock that as he tried to enter, the smoke formed a barrier, holding him back. "What...!?"

"Nobody can get inside, we've tried." The first officer insisted, "And it appears that the other aliens, your wife, and some of our own are trapped inside, including Commander Walters!"

Tom pressed his hands against the wall; it felt solid, but within it, smoke swirled and twisted in plumes that sometimes seemed to form shapes or faces. "Obbie is causing this...?"
Little bits of electricity pulsed in the smoke, and his eyes widened. This was Chaos Energy, and if anyone knew how to work Chaos Energy, it was the one who forged the emeralds from it.

He needed *Kaia.*

He hurried back towards his truck, climbing into the cab.

"Mr. Wachowski, where are you *going!?*"

"To get someone who might be able to help. If that cloud lets up before I get back, my family had better all still be here when I do!"
He put the truck in drive and the tires scraped in the gravel as he started out on the road again. "Great hiding skills, you two."

"Where are we going *now,* Mr. Tom?" Blaze asked as she popped back up from the floor of the truck.

"To the lake, there's someone there who might be able to help us and you two still need to *meet*..."

Maddie had been wandering the halls for several minutes and only seen one other person- a man in a lab coat- in the corridor, and he had not only not seemed to notice her, but had walked right *through* her.

That confirmed it, this whole place was an illusion, but of *what*, and *where*? and how was Obsidian forming it?

She paused in her search when Sonic began to stir, and she bent down against the wall as his eyes started to flutter open. "Sonic?"

"Nnn...Mmmmom...?" The hedgehog mumbled, staring upward blankly for a moment. Then his eyes widened and he tried to sit up, "M-Mom!"

"Hey, hey, easy...!" Maddie set him down on the floor, stroking his quills gently with a hand. "You're okay, you're alright... How's your head?"

"Ugh... Groggy... Where *are* we?"

"Not sure... But either *we're* not really *here*, or-"
She paused as another man walked by, completely ignoring them. "...Or *they're* not really *there*."

Sonic blinked for a moment, "Weird... Where's everyone *else*...?"

"Don't know that either, but we'll find them."
She stood up straight again, taking his arm to help him limp forward down the hall. "We gotta figure out where *we* are first..."

They'd wandered a few more minutes through empty corridors and seemingly endless doors, when they heard an alarm going off somewhere in the facility.

Intruder alert in Sector D... Intruder alert in Sector D... A robotic voice repeated overhead.

"You don't think we're in Sector D, do you?" Sonic asked.

"I think if we were the intruders, they would have tried to arrest us by now." Maddie assessed, "Let's keep going."

They did, looking for any sign of an exit to this place, and then they paused as they heard something from above. Something was moving through the air vents overhead, and then there was a light thud right above them.

"Ow..." Came a whispering voice, *"...Feels like I've got skid marks on my butt...!"*

"What's that...?" Sonic whispered.

"Probably the intruder." Maddie mumbled.

The grate cover on the vent was pulled back, and then they saw a familiar face peer down into the hall... It was himself. "It's... *Me?*" Sonic wondered.

There were enough differences that it was easy to tell the two apart, but this one seemed a little bit older. He had a scope of some sort on his head, and he looked left and right at the security cameras before dropping down and pressing himself against the wall.
He then zipped from wall to wall, dodging the view of each camera in turn.

"I think we need to follow." Sonic whispered, even though they knew nobody could hear them.

Maddie nodded, she had a feeling that whatever the reason for them being here was, it would have to do with her son's other self. With that in mind, they hurried down the hall after the other blue hedgehog. What was he searching for?

Then they heard a soft voice whispering in the air, coming from ahead.

"We didn't do anything, please let us out...! What kind of place is this...? We have to get out of here...!"

"You hear that, Mom?" Sonic asked.

Maddie nodded, and when they caught up with the other Sonic, he was peering around a corner, looking at a door that was labeled as a laboratory.

"Hmm... Maybe that's where they are... I have to get inside and check it out, but this won't be easy..."
The other Sonic rubbed his chin, looking thoughtful. He must be here to rescue the source of the little voice, which seemed all too fitting for him. He was still thinking when they caught up-

-and then the lights went out.

Chapter End Notes

Tom was about to add more government agents to his "Punched Them in the Face" List XD Watch it, guys, he'll do it!

Chapter 10: Trouble in the Past

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Knuckles and Tails were following people around *too,* but it wasn't a copy of themselves; it was a little girl, and a hedgehog.

The pair of brothers had been walking along, and quickly found that the humans were not aware of their presence. They could walk through the humans and- as Tails accidentally found out when he tried to *lean* against one- the *walls.*

"Tails!" Knuckles cried as his brother suddenly disappeared behind the wall with a yelp.

Tails grunted as he hit the floor, but then he looked up and saw he wasn't alone.

A human girl sat in the room, several different types of medical equipment and monitors around her, and a hedgehog from their world sat on the bed beside her, resting his head on her shoulder. She laid one hand on top of his, his hands gripped into fists.

Knuckles was suddenly stumbling through the wall as well, "T-Tails, are you-"

"Shh!" Tails hissed, looking back up at the pair. Knuckles looked as well, his brows furrowing as he bent down and helped the fox up. "Look at his markings..."

The hedgehog was black in color, but with red eyes and streaks. They were almost in exact mimicry of Obsidian's, but with Obsidian's streaks being blue and his eyes green. Obsidian's streaks were also much more natural in how they faded out into the black a bit with stray blue quills here and there- *this* hedgehog's markings were sharply contrasting, like they'd been painted there with utmost precision.

"He *does* resemble Obsidian *greatly*..." Knuckles whispered.

"I'm sorry it hurts you, Shadow..." The girl apologized, patting Shadow's hand.

"I'm sorry it hasn't saved you..." Shadow responded, his brows furrowing as he stared at the floor. *"...What am I doing wrong...?"*

"Nothing!"
The girl sat up a little straighter, *"None of this is your fault."*

"But Maria, that's the only reason I exist!" Shadow looked back up to her, *"Professor Robotnik created me. My purpose is for your grandfather to use me to find a cure for your condition, and if I can't do that-"*

"You are still my friend," She gripped his hand harder, *"And still very, very important to me... You're my best friend, and I don't want to see you beat yourself up because we haven't found a solution yet."*

"When *was* this...?" Knuckles whispered, "Is this *now?* Is this happening *now?*"

Tails shrugged, "I don't know... But I don't think so."
He walked over towards the bed, "Look at her clothes. From the studies I've done on human history, this style was from several decades ago. I think this is the past, but I don't know exactly how long ago."

"If it *is* the past... And this Shadow Hedgehog resembles Obsidian so closely... Is it possible that they are *related?* Perhaps even-"

"You think Shadow might be Obsidian's *dad?* Let's try to get more facts before we make that assessment."

"Why else would Obsidian bring us here?"

"Obsidian was a *newborn* when we found him, Knuckles. He wouldn't remember his father, and he certainly wouldn't remember his father's past from *before* he was *born.* No, there has to be some other connection-"
Their ears pricked then as an alarm began to blare, and Shadow and Maria got up from the bed. "What's happening?"

Maria had asked the same question, and Shadow frowned. *"Hmm... Not sure, come on. We must find the professor!"*

He took Maria's hand and they hurried out of the room, and Tails and Knuckles followed. Whatever was going on, it had sent the entire station into action, as humans were now rushing about frantically trying to get from place to place. It was fortunate that the fox and echidna could simply run right through them, or they may have lost track of the fleeing pair. They came to a laboratory, and they saw a man frantically shoving papers in his coat pockets.

"Grandfather, what is going on!?" Maria worried.

The man turned, a large, graying mustache crossing his face. He resembled Dr. Robotnik greatly, but there were enough differences that Tails and Knuckles knew they weren't the same person. *"Quickly, we must get to the escape pods!"*

"What's happening, Professor?" Shadow asked.

"There's no time to explain everything. They're coming for Shadow and we cannot let them have him!"

Maria nodded, and then began to run down the hall again, pulling Shadow along behind her. *"Come on, Shadow!"*

"M-Maria, hold on!" Shadow stammered before finally catching his footing underneath him so she wasn't dragging him. *"Your heart-!"*

"Don't worry about me, Shadow. I'm fine."

Tails and Knuckles started to follow, and Tails gasped as he heard screams, shouts and gunshots coming from behind him. "They're hurting people to get to him!"

"Come, we must see what happens!" Knuckles took the lead, and Tails' twirled his namesakes and flew after him. Maria and Shadow were hurrying, the girl's grandfather taking up the rear. Tails looked back and saw soldiers with guns chasing after them; oh, how he wished he had his own weapons and could interact with the scene, how he wished he could help hold them back until they got away.

The professor was lagging behind, he wasn't able to keep up with the younger pair. He then came to a stop, and pressed a series of buttons, closing off a door.

"Wait! Professor!" Shadow shouted in panic as he saw the man being separated from them.

"Go, children! I'll hold them off!"

"Grandfather!" Maria cried as the door closed, tears welling in her eyes. *"No...!"*

"He's buying us time, we can't let it be in vain...!" Shadow hissed, tears of his own appearing. They began to run again, and Tails and Knuckles- after looking back at the closed door sadly- followed. They had to see where it was going, where it was leading.

The sounds of the attacking army faded a bit thanks to the door, but not completely; they'd break through eventually, Shadow and Maria had that long to get away.

They reached a door and Maria opened it, revealing a large, circular room. *"Here... Here..."* she panted, *"The capsule room..."*

Shadow led her into the room, sitting her down for a moment as she coughed and wheezed. *"Rest for a second... Where is the control panel for the capsules?"*

She pointed across the room towards a console, *"Over...There."*

"Good, you're going first."
Shadow started towards the console, but Tails saw Maria was moving towards another console beside her, keeping her eyes intently on him. *"Not the way we'd always talked about finally going to Earth, but-"*

Click! Hisssss...

Shadow gasped as he stepped on a panel on the floor, and then it shot up and a capsule shot up and sealed him in. *"What!? Maria-"*
He looked to Maria, whose hands were on the console and had pressed a button to initiate the capsule's activation. She was weakening, her legs shaking as she pulled herself up onto her feet.

"Not... Letting them...get you...!" She hissed, her hair dangling in her face. She brushed it back, giving the hedgehog a tired smile. *"Sorry for the surprise, Shadow..."*

"No! No, Maria, you can't do this!" Shadow kicked and punched at the side of the pod, *"Maria!"*

"I need you to promise me something, Shadow..." The girl's voice quaked with exhaustion even though she smiled, tears spilling down her cheeks as she wrapped her fingers around the release lever. *"Promise me... That you will live... Okay...?"*

"Maria, no!"

"Do it for me, little brother, okay...? Live for me...I need you to do that...Okay? Promise me."

"Hey!"
They turned towards the door, and they saw a soldier had gotten through and was now pointing his gun at the girl, *"Take your hands off of that lever, girl! I mean it!"*

Maria's hands were shaking, her eyes moving to the man, and then back to Shadow.

Shadow shook his head, tears welling in his eyes.

"Take your hands off! That thing isn't worth your life!"

Maria looked at Shadow once more, and then her brows furrowed and her teeth clenched. *"Yes. He. Is! Sayonara, Shadow the Hedgehog...!"* She hissed as she looked to Shadow, and then she yanked the lever down.

Tails and Knuckles heard the gunshot and the capsule's hiss as it was released and shot down, but they didn't see what happened, because as the capsule fell, so did they.

The mist swallowed them both and the ground disappeared, sending them tumbling and freefalling through the murky surroundings.

"Kn-Knuckles!" Tails reached up, his twirling tails doing nothing to stop or even *slow* his plummet. Knuckles reached down, trying desperately to reach his little brother, and then finally got his wrist and yanked him up and into his arms.

"I have you, Tails!" Knuckles shouted over the wind rushing past them, twisting his body so that if they *did* hit something, *he* would be the first to make contact. "I have you!"

They fell for another moment or so, and then the mist disappeared, and Knuckles felt a gust of air catch under them, slowing their descent before they hit something hard and rolled down. The echidna's back finally found something to stop them, and he gave a grunt as the wind was knocked out of his lungs.

For several moments, they laid still on the ground, eyes closed and catching their breath. "...Are you hurt?" Tails whispered.

"No... *You?*"

"No..."

Knuckles released his brother and Tails rolled out of his arms and onto his hands and knees. He looked up, finding the mist was lingering on the edges of this place as well, but it was different. The carpet floors and metal walls had been replaced by stone, pieces of torn fabric draping on the walls like broken tapestries.
"...*Now* where are we...?"

Tails sighed, looking around with tired eyes. "...We'll figure it out... But I'd like to avoid falling through that any-"

"Shh!"
Knuckles brought a finger to his lips, looking around. "...Listen..."

The fox listened intently, and then he heard it... A distant infant's cry. "...That's *Obsidian!*"
He and the echidna started up the sloping floor, towards the sound. "Hang on, Obbie, we're coming!"

The wheels of Tom's truck scraped in the gravel road as he came to a stop at the lake's edge. Placing the car in park, he hurried down towards the shoreline, overlooking the water.

"Kaia! Kaia!" He hollered, hoping she could somehow hear him. "Kaia, please! It's Tom! I need your help!"

The water of the lake was rippling in the wind, making it hard to tell where she might be- if she was in view from this side at all- but its color was dull enough that he could make out a blue shape coming towards the shore, and then Kaia slithered out onto the shore. In the weeks that had passed, he saw she'd gained more blue to her color, but it was still far from vibrant.
"Sheriff Wachowski," She greeted, "I take it this is about that sudden burst of Chaos energy I'm detecting."

"Yes. I think Obsidian's locked himself and everyone else inside of the house with some sort of cloud shield that I can't get through. It's *definitely* chaos energy, and you're the closest thing to an expert on the subject we've got."

Kaia nodded slowly, and then peered behind him as Silver and Blaze popped up. "Well, hello..." She greeted.

"Uh yeah... Kaia, this is Silver and Blaze, they're new to town. Kids, this is Kaia, the creator of the Chaos Emeralds."

"Chaos Emeralds?" Blaze inquired, "Are they anything like Sol Emeralds?"

"I'm... Not sure?
Kaia then turned back to the issue at hand, "A cloud shield, huh...? Sounds like a dreamscape projection."

"Which is?"

"It's... It's like a temporary, warped pocket in time and space where the creator can project their thoughts into visual and tangible constructs."

"So it's like a virtual reality chamber?"

"Sort of...? I'm not fully versed in that technology, but everything *looks* and *feels* real, even if it's not. And if it's encompassed your entire home, then whatever the little one has constructed must be *massive.* Possibly multiple *'rooms'* of warped time and space."

"Can you help me get inside?"

Kaia shrugged, "I can try, but if not, we'll have to wait until Obsidian gets tired enough to not be able to focus on the projection and make it tangible. If he wears himself out, then the dreamscape should collapse and release the occupants."

Tom looked back towards the direction he'd come, "Well then, I guess it's a good thing he's a baby that wears out quickly... We should hurry. Who knows what kind of lollipop candyland that little mind's conjured up. They're probably stuck in a musical with dancing flowers right about now..."

Chapter End Notes

> Thomas Wachowski, you have NO IDEA what your youngest has your family in right now... Not a lollipop candyland, I'll tell you that!

Chapter 11: Trouble in the Alternate-Present

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Maddie shut her eyes tightly to try and adjust her eyes a bit to the darkness. One moment, she and Sonic were following his counterpart through a series of halls in some sort of military facility, searching for a pleading little voice, and the next... The lights had mysteriously gone out.

Abnormality detected in the electrical system... Abnormality detected in the electrical system...

"Yeah, no kidding." Sonic muttered, and then he saw his counterpart rush into the laboratory after taking advantage of the darkness. They followed.

"What happened!?"

"Oh great, now we can't see anything!"

The scientists complained and tried to get their monitors back online, and Sonic saw his counterpart smash through a large capsule in the center, and then duck into a corner with another small figure in his arms.

"What the-! Where'd they go!?"

The other Sonic hushed the little figure as she tried to say his name, but then a second, even smaller figure began to chatter excitedly and grabbed onto his neck.

"Over there!"

"Let's go...!" the other Sonic hissed, handing the little creature to the second, who nodded in agreement, and then they hurried back out of the room.

"Have a feeling we gotta see this jail break through, Mom." Sonic assured, and he and Maddie hurried after the pair. It was easier to keep up with him now, as his little friend couldn't run as fast as he could and he wasn't about to leave her behind.

"Gee, Sonic. How did you turn off all of the electricity?"

"I didn't do it, Cream! I guess it just happened!"

"Maybe it's because you bring good luck wherever you go!"

"Heh, you may be right!"

"Commander Walters certainly wouldn't think so," Maddie muttered.

And then all at once, the lights came back on with a vengeance.

"Augh!" Sonic covered his eyes, "It singed my corneas, I'm *blind*!"

Maddie would have laughed at her son, but she was feeling the same sentiment, not to mention the lights being on meant the others were visible now. The cameras all turned to face them; there was no hiding from the scientists now.

"I shouldn't have said anything," Cream whimpered, *"I must be a jinx!"*

"This isn't your fault!" The other Sonic insisted.
They all looked up as the tops of the cameras then opened, and little weapons turrets emerged from them and aimed at the pair. *"Cream... Hang on!"*

The two shot forward, running from lasers being fired at them, and Sonic and Maddie followed. There had to be a reason why Obsidian was showing them this... Maybe this was what he feared would happen if GUN got a hold of them, which honestly, seemed like a fair assumption to Maddie.

The two fleeing figures dodged the lasers, and Sonic released Cream's hand, telling her to run while he jumped up onto one of the turrets. He punched the camera clean off its base and then launched to another, grabbing it and turning it to fire the lasers not at the rabbit, but at the rest of the cameras down the hall.

"Keep running!"

Cream obeyed, holding the other little creature close to her chest.

Area D-2 lockdown in progress... Area D-2 lockdown in progress...

Quarantine doors were coming down from the ceiling, closing off sections of the hall.

"The door, we can't make it out!" Cream cried.

The other Sonic gasped and then zipped down, scooping the little rabbit up into his arms and ducking under the door.

Sonic gasped as well, his feet skidding on the floor as he tried not to run into the door. It slammed shut against the floor, but Sonic wasn't going to stop in time. He braced for impact...and then phased right through it.

"Sonic!"
Maddie ran to the door and tried to feel it for a second, and then she too passed through it to the other side, where her son was on the floor. "You okay?"

"F-Fine...!" Sonic admitted, pulling himself back up to his feet. "Let's go!"

Once more, they were on the move, but as they ran to catch up with the other two, they saw random cameras lying on the ground with small, triangular shapes sticking out of them; not

Sonic's handiwork, but almost like tiny paper airplanes that had sliced into the metal.
"Whoa...! Looks like they got help from the outside!"

Facility Lockdown in progress...Facility Lockdown in prooooo...

The lights went out once more, but the cameras were still active- and firing around sporadically. Walls, the ceiling, the floor, everywhere was getting hit even when there was nothing to shoot at.
Just ahead of them, they saw the pair starting up a staircase.

"Great!" Sonic huffed, "I *needed* some cardio in my workout!"

They ran up the stairs after them, but Maddie huffed as she saw her son getting ahead of her.
"S-Sonic, I-"
She gasped as one of the lasers came up from below, slicing part of the stairs away. She wobbled on the edge and then caught herself, looking back at her son above her and across the crevice.

"Mom!" Sonic paused, looking back and forth between her and the others continuing up the crumbling stairs.

Maddie looked at the space between them, and then furrowed her brows. This was all an illusion, so she had to hope that if she missed, she wouldn't actually fall all the way back to the floor.

She then ran forward and jumped.

Her fingers grasped onto the edge of the step above her, and she gave a sigh of relief as it didn't crumble under her weight.

Sonic held tightly with one hand onto the remaining bits of railing, and the other he offered to her. "Come on, Mom! You can do it!"

Maddie dared to release with one hand and grabbed onto Sonic's, who grunted as he helped to pull her up onto the steps. "Huh...Huh... Thanks, Kiddo...!"

They looked up at the other two, who had reached the top and were now resting. It appeared that the worst was behind them... Then the other Sonic punched a hole through the wall and they disappeared into a bright light of outside.

"...Now what...?" Sonic hummed, leaning back against the wall before being reminded that they could pass through them as he started to phase through it. "Whoa whoa whoa!"

"Sonic!"
Maddie grabbed Sonic's hand and tried to pull him back in, but then Sonic's other hand lifted up in a pausing motion... And then a waving motion; he wanted her to follow him through.

Maddie released his hand and then crawled through alongside him. The other side of the wall wasn't outside of this compound, it was another place. The other Sonic and the little rabbit were gone, replaced by a dark, dismal hallway. "Whoa..."

Both of them crawled through and then got up to their feet, "Where are we now?"

Broken walls of stone and torn tapestries surrounded them, and as Maddie looked around and listened, she heard a familiar cry. "*Obsidian...!*"

"Come on, Mom!"
Sonic grabbed her hand and they were off running down a hall again, "Hold on, Obbie! We're coming!"

They ran, and the deeper into this new area, the more voices they heard. They turned a corner, and Maddie was so used to people just being ghostly and non-corporeal that when she made physical contact into the man standing in front of her she was taken by surprise when she bounced off of him. "Wha-Whoa!"

"Whoa!"
The man caught her from hitting the floor, pulling her back up onto her feet. "Nice to see you again, Mrs. Wachowski."

Maddie looked back, and she recognized the man as one of the other two officers that had been with Commander Walters. "You-"

"Look, I didn't agree to do anything about hurting you *or* your kids." The man apologized, "I was just trying to follow orders... But now I need your help."

Sonic frowned, "Oh really...? Doing *what?*"

"The Commander and my colleague are both trapped by debris in one of the rooms, and it's gonna take more than one person to move some of it. *Unless,* of course, that one person is your oldest. I think that kid could move an entire *freight train* out of the way with one hand."

Maddie sighed, "Fine... But then you guys had better start explaining some things."

"Thank you... They're this way."
He led them down one of the adjacent halls, "By the way...I'm Abe... Abraham Tower the Third, to be exact."

"Nice to meet you, Abe..."

"How many rooms are *in* this place...!?"

Tails felt like he and Knuckles had spent *hours* walking in circles, not getting any closer to their little brother's cries. He had to admit, it was feeling rather hopeless. "I hate hearing him..." Tails whimpered, "Hearing him cry and not being able to find and help him...!"

He paused to look at one of the torn tapestries on the wall, marking with a crest that sort of resembled a bird. It *had* to be of some significance...

Then he heard other voices coming from down another hall to their right, some of which were familiar. "...Is that Sonic?"

Knuckles led the charge down the hall, "Sonic! Sonic, is that *you*!?"

"Knuckles!?"

They turned as the hall curved, and were relieved to see their brother and mother both standing there, unharmed. "Mom!" Tails cried, running up into her arms and hugging her tightly. "Mom...!"

"Hi, Baby...!" Maddie cooed, putting one arm around him and the other around Knuckles who returned the gesture. "Thank goodness... Are you both okay?"

"Yes, Ma'am..." Tails wiped tears from his eyes, "I'm just glad to *see* you...!"

"Me too, Tails..."

"Can we save the sentimental affections for later, please?"

Maddie glared at Commander Walters on the other side of a wall of debris, "Well, if you hadn't shot my boys, we wouldn't *be* in this mess!"

"Sorry sir, but I'm with *her* on this one." The one officer outside of the debris admitted, "I'm not so sure tranquilizing them and snatching the baby from them was the smartest move."

"*Obviously!*" Sonic complained, "If you think we can't keep our powers under control as teens, then what did you think was going to happen when you got *Obsidian* upset?"

"Granted, we didn't know he *had* this much power at such a young age..." Tails hummed, "...But the point still stands!"

"Speaking of what stands..." the free officer murmured as he looked to their mom, "Now that we have your oldest here..."

Maddie nodded with a sigh, "Knuckles, can you help get this debris out of here?"

Knuckles frowned, "You wish to save those that trapped us here in the first place?"

"As much as it *pains me* to agree with Mom on this one..." Sonic groaned, "...It *is* the right thing to do..."

"Hmm... Very well, but I will not take joy in it."

"Not a problem, big guy."

Knuckles walked over to the debris and began to pull pieces away like a game of Jack Straws- steel beams and concrete slabs being lifted and set aside until the other two could climb out and into the hallway. "There. You have been released from your makeshift prison."

The two officers didn't even give the echidna a look, much less a thank you, but the third one did.
"I appreciate you putting things aside for a moment to do that."

"...You are welcome." Knuckles muttered, "Now, we *must* find Obsidian and rescue him from this place."

Their mom nodded, "Agreed, I hate hearing him *cry* like this- and this time, no tranquilizer darts!"

"Considering we lost our weapons the moment we arrived here, that shouldn't be an issue." Commander Walters grumbled.

Tails hoped that Obsidian would let them find him now; if he was actively trying to keep them from reaching him, that would certainly explain why they couldn't seem to find him.

"Obbie?" Sonic called out, "Obbie, it's *us*, your *family*! Plus a couple of doofuses, but they won't hurt you again, I promise!"

Tails found to his curiosity that finally, the cries were getting louder; they were getting closer. He wished he had some device that could pinpoint the source of the sound so they could at least know which halls and doors to take.

Then they heard voices... Some whispers down the corridor.

Humanity isn't just jealous of your power, they fear it...! They'll use this incident as an excuse to hunt you down!

It's futile. The world will betray you... Why fight... For those who will persecute you later!?

"Hello!?" Commander Walters hollered, "Who's there!?"

But there was no answer, the hall quiet again aside from the soft cries of a child, now shifting in tone.

"You hear that?" Sonic's ears pricked, "He's *hurt!*"

They picked up the pace, hurrying and the cries getting louder; other sounds were coming in now too, the buzzing of machinery, a collective chatter of voices... And a light was shining from ahead.

They turned the corner and found one wall was lined with massive windows, and when they looked through the windows, Tails' heart sunk into his stomach.

"*OBSIDIAN!*"

Kaia gripped the side of the truck's bed as Tom drove back towards the house; she could feel the Chaos Energy more clearly the closer they got to it. There were flickers of both *negative* and *positive* chaos energy, but she had a feeling it was due to the fact that Sonic and Knuckles were *also* inside of the dreamscape. They were the ones giving off the positive charges, and Obsidian, the negative; together, both charges were clashing, forming the lightning that pulsed on the edges of the perimeter like a storm cloud.

She hopped out of the back before Tom had even come to a full stop, her feet gripping the gravel as she walked towards the house. Indeed, the entire house was enveloped with the energy, pulsing and shifting.

She barely acknowledged the officers standing outside, aiming their weapons at her.

"I *wouldn't.*" Tom warned, "Remember what happened the *last time* you guys threatened an alien?"

The men's weapons slowly lowered.

Kaia walked towards the cloud, reaching a hand out towards it. She hadn't interacted with this much chaos energy at one time in a long time, not since before the echidnas stole her emeralds from her. The edges of it swirled outwards to her fingers, wrapping around them like little vines of purple mist.

"What do you think?" Tom asked, "You think you can get inside?"

Kaia looked back towards him, and then nodded. "...I can..." She whispered. This was her element, it would hardly react to her presence and buck back like it had with the humans... In theory. "Sit tight, Sheriff Wachowski."

She then pressed against the wall, and the mist began to pull back a little to her slide into it. She gave a smile, it was working.

The moment she was fully enclosed in the mist, she felt the energies merging with hers, shifting her form a bit. There wasn't enough Chaos Energy here to bring her to her ultimate form, but she could feel her teeth were getting sharper and the protrusions of other fins were forming on her arms and legs.
Then she heard it; voices, whispers from all over. She needed to focus all the noise, try to identify where exactly in all of the murky surroundings Obsidian and the others were. She closed her eyes, pulling the energy in towards her. *I am here, little god... She sent out, ...I want to help you, but I need you to help me first... What is troubling you?*

There was at first no response, just the whispering chatter of a million different worlds... Timelines...
Kaia's eyes widened. ...*Solaris...*

Do not utter that name!
The voice rang through, clear and true. *Do not remind me of that name!*

Kaia nodded, *I see...*

...I don't want to hurt anymore...

...Then show them, little one... Show them what hurts you, let them help you...

...They will not like what they see.

...From what I have seen in my time here, little one... No human ever does...

Chapter End Notes

Obsidian has a few things to get off his chest...

Chapter 12: From the Mouth of Babes with Past Trauma

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They hurried down the corridor until they found a series of windows overlooking a room. In the center of the room was a large machine, with a capsule in the center. The air around them became quite cold, their breath visible in puffs of mist. Humans in white coats and gloves surrounded the machine, some at the console pressing buttons and others scribbling down information.
Maddie was hardly paying attention to the humans however, she was paying attention to the tiny shape curled up *inside* of the capsule... The little hedgehog who was wailing in pain as pulses of electricity were fired at him from below.

"What is going on here!?" Walters demanded, but the humans did not respond.

"They're part of the illusion," Tails replied, "We're merely observers to the scene, we can't *engage* with them."
They then all looked back to the scene below as Obsidian cried out again. "What are they *doing* to him...!?"

"Energy levels are fluctuating, but remaining within parameters." One of the humans reported as he looked at the console, *"The power source is contained, your highness."*

"Excellent."
The man also wore a lab coat, but his also bore a symbol, a crest of some sort that matched the ones on the tapestries in the halls. He walked over to the capsule and placed a hand on it, seeming completely unconcerned with the infant's cries of anguish. *"Just think, with more tests, we may be able to unlock the full extent of its power... To traverse time and erase every poor decision so that it will never have happened."*

Obsidian's eyes were blank and hopeless, his body trying to go limp between shocks and cries of pain.

The man's lips curled back a bit into a smile, *"Think of all the things we'll be able to do once we understand how you work..."*

Tails frowned as he watched these humans torture his little brother. "It looks like all of this is a dreamscape that Obsidian's made, but *why?*"

Knuckles growled and then punched at the window to shatter the glass; as he swung, his hand went right through it and he was reminded that it wasn't even there, and the echidna yelped as he tumbled over.

"Knuckles!"
Tails and Sonic grabbed onto his feet and caught him from falling all the way to the floor.

"You okay?"
Knuckles was still limp, "...Knux?"

"Sonic..." Knuckles whispered.

Sonic pulled Knuckles back up and then leaned over the side of the wall, wondering what he'd found.

"No, Sonic. Do not, it's not-"

It was too late, Sonic had seen it already. What he saw was not what he'd *expected*... Nor what he'd ever *wanted* to see.

Lying on the floor in a heap was what looked like Sonic himself, but perhaps a little older. His eyes were slightly open, but lifeless, his chest unmoving and releasing no visible breath like the rest of them. His hand was over his chest, but Sonic could see the red under it... It looked like this Sonic had been killed and then just dumped here in the corner, where his body was out of sight, out of mind.

Sonic jumped down all the way to the floor, overlooking the lifeless body, and then towards the humans. "It's like they don't even *care*..." He whispered.

"Sonic, don't worry about that." Tails alerted, "Try to get Obsidian out of there!"

How could he not worry about this? This weird part of dreamscape had him *dead!* But his little brother was right; he needed to help Obsidian.
He hurried over through the humans to the console of the machine, placing his hands on the side of the capsule; the glass was rather warm, but not quite hot enough to hurt him. He worried that Obsidian might actually be getting *burned* inside of this container.
"Obbie!" He called, hoping the little hedgehog could hear him. "Obbie, it's me! I'm okay, it's alright!"

All of this, if they understood it correctly, was a projection that Obsidian had created. That would mean that the dead Sonic was a creation of Obsidian's imagination, and perhaps what he'd *thought* had happened when Sonic went down from the tranquilizer.
It was confusing though; if Obsidian had made this place to *protect* himself from the GUN agents, why would he put himself somewhere where he was being *hurt*- and even *tortured?*

Sonic jumped up onto the console, pressing his hands against the glass. It was solid, unlike the windows above, which meant that Obsidian was focusing more on keeping himself trapped than keeping the rest of them trapped; he had convinced himself that it was real and he couldn't escape.
"Obsidian, listen. It's *not* real, okay? You're *not* trapped in this lab, and you're not *going to be* trapped in some lab, okay? I'm not going to let them hurt you."

Then the scientists stiffened in place, and one of them began to speak, the voice of Longclaw escaping her mouth.
'You have a power like nothing I've ever seen... Which means that someone will always want it!'

'Or be threatened by it...'
The second voice came from Sonic's limp counterpart, which was now sitting up and its head still drooping like it were a puppet on strings. Another thing Sonic noticed was that even as he spoke, his mouth had strangely disappeared. The hand that had been covering his chest fell to his side, revealing a hole in his torso that went all the way through.

Sonic swallowed hard and tried to not look at the hole, instead at his copy's face.

'Humans are selfish... They cannot handle not being the most powerful beings in existance... They will try to control you... And if they cannot...'
The counterpart's irises shifted to a glowing red, and blood stained his quills red in streaks, *'...They will put you into permanent sleep.'*

Sonic's brows furrowed, "Not all humans are like that... Lots of them are really nice."

'Perhaps... But those that are...nice... They are the common, the majority... It is the humans with their hands on the triggers, the ones who have no others to hold them accountable... The ones who want to rewrite history to what they perceive as right...'

Suddenly the scene shifted around them, and when they opened their eyes, they were back in the misty, broken void with the cracked stone courtyard under their feet, though fortunately they were all still together. Obsidian was no longer in the capsule, but instead curled up inside of a metal cage. He didn't move or cry; he just laid there, staring off into space.

The puppet Sonic was now standing, stumbling slowly forward and his head tilting back and forth, side to side as he walked. *'Controlling time to erase poor choices... Sounds like a good plan... but when one human goes back and erases Hitler from history... And another erases the Founding Fathers... and another erases the Roman Empire... History, time itself, ceases to be... What do you think happened when I tried to do what they had desired...? To erase all of the mistakes of mankind and beyond...?'*
He loosely waved an arm to their surroundings, *'...This... This was all that was left of time...'*

Commander Walters frowned, "You blame *us* for another's actions!?"

'I blame no one here... I simply look through the timelines... Seeing a common thread...'

A voice then began to echo from the void.

"The emerald he seeks could power my wildest designs... My genius wouldn't just be recognized on Earth, but would spread virally to every corner of the galaxy... Allowing me to harness all the negative forces of the universe... Commune with darkness itself..."

"*Robotnik*...!" Knuckles growled, assuming this was spoken during their brief time working together. When, he wasn't sure, but it had to have been specifically out of his earshot.

Then other voices spoke from the darkness, not voices they knew.

"Don't talk to me about fair! Not after what happened here! She was my only friend, but then your ruler sent soldiers here to take her away from me! I tried to save her, but there were too

many for me to stop...! I never saw her again... She wasn't a threat to anyone, all she ever wanted was to visit your world, but she never got the chance!"

"The entity that was sealed within the planet has awakened! Now I just need to harness its power...!"

"We should not try to help our own kind by bringing harm to someone else, it's wrong!"

"Humans, willing to sacrifice their own when overcome by greed. They, are a foolish race..."

"Your friends have been taken there by the army and placed under twenty-four hour guard! The government believes they may be aliens, or perhaps members of a mutant species created by an enemy power and designed to attack our population... I wonder if they might not be right, eh...?"

"What am I running away from anyway? I mean, I haven't done anything wrong, have I?... I just wonder what it is they think I did..."

"I've been thinking... About what the president said... Do you really think they'll... Take him away? I mean, I know he's different and all, but why should that matter? Deep down, he's the same as you and me, right...?"

The Puppet Sonic then spoke again, *'The human race is nothing if not insistent on not feeling weak or incapable of defeating and destroying everything it sees as opposition... That is why he remains in storage, am I right, Commander Walters...?'*

"*Who?*" Knuckles asked firmly, "Who do they speak of?"

"No one of consequence."

The puppet Sonic's head tilted awkwardly to the side as it seemed to turn towards the man, and then he chuckled in a menacing manner. *'Not of consequence... We shall see, won't we...? You think you know what happened in those days... You think you know what all of it was for... You are wrong...'*

"What...What *are* you...!?"

The hedgehog's quills lifted up a bit, streaks of white appearing on them that seemed to be burning, light floating off of them in plumes of fire. *'I am... The Flame of Time... The Trigger... The Sun... I was the observer, the being that looked over all of time and its timelines... Until your kind deemed me unworthy of being called a living thing... Until you decided I was only a power source that could be used for your own goals...'*

"He raises a fair point," Maddie finally spoke, "You're trying to keep these kids locked up where you get to choose what they do with their lives. But you don't get to make that choice for them any more than they make that choice for you."

"Mrs. Wachowski, I am only trying to protect our planet from potential threats!"

"You think that's what *he* believes?" The young officer asked firmly.

"What are you talking about, Agent Tower?"

Tower's brows furrowed, his voice deepening a bit. "...You *know* what I mean, Sir..."

Sonic walked over to the cage and pulled the top off, giving a grin as he realized that meant he was getting through to the little hedgehog. "*Nobody* is going to use you for *anything,* I'm *not* going to let them *hurt you.*" He repeated, picking him up and holding him close to his chest. "No matter what happened before or what happens from here on out, we Wachowskis stick together... No matter what."

Three pillars of light then began to ignite around them, varying shades of gold and voices speaking from each in turn.

"If the world chooses to be my enemy, I will fight like I always have!"

"If this is your dream world, then it's a world I don't want any part of!"

"Despair is a luxury we don't have!"

Obsidian then relaxed in Sonic's grasp, resting his head on Sonic's chest with a sigh and his fingers grasping Sonic's fur.
"On-ee..." He murmured, "...Sorry."

"Shh..."
Sonic rested his head on top of the littler hedgehog's, "...Shh... Just go to sleep, okay...? It's okay, I know you're tired... On-ee's got you, On-ee's got you..."

He stroked the littler hedgehog's back and felt him relaxing even further in his arms, his breathing slowing.

Each pillar then shifted in shape, taking on silhouettes of three hedgehogs, their quills floating behind... Sonic recognized one as himself, and another... Was that Silver?
The hedgehogs then lifted their hands up, coming together over the group like a canopy, and all three of them uttered two words in unison.

"CHAOS...CONTROL!"

The mist turned gold and swirled around them, and then began to fold away again- but this time, it took them back to where they started; the familiar walls and halls of the Wachowski home reappeared, and the mist disappeared completely.

"Maddie! Boys!"
The fact that Tom was there and rushing up to hug his wife tightly was proof enough for the Wachowski's, Maddie grabbing onto her husband just as tightly. "Oh, thank God...! Are you guys okay?"

"We're fine, Tom." Maddie assured with a smile, "We just got busy dealing with a toddler tantrum."

"Mrs. Wachowski," Commander Walters grumbled, "I believe you fail to fully comprehend and express the *psychological torture* we all just went through."

Sonic shrugged as he held his littlest brother in his arms, "We come in peace and you got told off, what else is there to say?"

The officer glared at the hedgehog, and then made a motion for his men to vacate the building. Agent Tower lingered a moment longer, giving an almost suspicious look at his commander before leaving.
"You must understand that an infant with that level of power is a dangerous thing to be kept unchecked."

"He *isn't* unchecked."
They all turned, seeing a familiar shape perched on the stair banister, her eyes glowing green and her brows furrowed. "He has his *family.*"

"*Kaia...!*" Knuckles breathed.

Commander Walters stepped back as Kaia jumped off of the banister and stepped forward. "What *are* you!?"

"She is the water goddess from our world that came here in search of her stolen property." Knuckles informed calmly, as if it was perfectly normal to tell someone that they were facing a deity.

"Some might call me *The Lady of the Lake...*" Kaia informed with a calm, informal tone. "Sheriff Wachowski saw the dreamscape forged by Obsidian and came to me for help. He thought I might be able to get into the dreamscape and make sure you were alright."
She then looked to the infant, "But by the time I did, you guys had it pretty well handled. So, I just stayed out of sight until you guys were able to calm Obsidian down and disable the dreamscape."

Commander Tower glared at Maddie, "And how long has *she* been here?"

"*Far longer* than *they* have been here. Time means little when you are immortal, but I would say many *centuries.* Far longer than you humans have been messing with energies you shouldn't be and far longer than you have record. *And yet-*"
She stepped up to him, arms folded behind her and her form shifting so that she was eye to eye with Commander Walters. "I mean your people no harm... But I *also* do not intend to stand by if innocents are being mistreated simply because you do not *understand* them... If you are so worried about what goes on here in Green Hills, might I suggest you *get to know* the children before you *condemn* them...?"

The commander was quiet for several moments, him and Kaia looking into each other's eyes... And then he stood down, turning away. "Very well, we will leave the infant with you. But I warn you... This had better not happen again, and he *will* be the last."

The officer left and Tom closed the door behind them. The house was utterly quiet for a moment, and then once the GUN trucks had turned out of the drive and were long out of

sight, Sonic plopped down onto the floor with a hard huff.

"Man...!" He looked at the toddler, "You really put us all through the wringer, Tiny."

"What happened in here?" Tom asked softly, "I rushed over here and the entire house was enveloped with smoke and I couldn't get in because of an invisible wall-"

"Obsidian's power created a false reality," Knuckles informed, "Within which he projected a scene of himself being tortured by humans within a laboratory. We were separated from each other in scenes of similar mistreatment by humans, but when we came together, a disembodied spirit indeed spoke harshly to the soldiers about their treatment of us."

Sonic shuddered, "Yeah, told them off through a zombie version of *me.* It was *creepy*..."

Maddie sighed as she stroked Obsidian's quills with a finger, "Poor baby... He didn't ask for any of this..."

"None of us did." Tom murmured.

Tails crawled over and looked at Obsidian, who seemed to have worn himself out and was now fast asleep in Sonic's arms. "Do you think... Do you think that was *real?* That he actually went through that before we found him?"

"If he did, I doubt that the government would be honest about it." Maddie frowned, "They mentioned someone else... Someone else *'in storage.'* The way it was worded, I think it's another alien from their planet, and Walters *definitely* knows about them."

"And I think I know who it is." Tails worried as he looked to Knuckles and got a nod in response, "We have to help them!"

Tom put a hand on the fox's shoulder, "We have to get more information before we can do *anything* about it, Kiddo. Right now, I think all of you could use some rest and showers. It sounds like you all... *Saw some things*."

"*Definitely.*" Sonic agreed, handing Obsidian over to his mom. "I call first one..."

Chapter End Notes

I wonder if Walters will finally get the point- now that he's been told off by two deities in one afternoon- to keep his paranoia to himself?

Chapter 13: At the Dinner Table

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

What had I done...?

Each of the others took their turns in the shower, and I could only guess that they were trying to scrub away what had been seen and heard that day. Tom ordered pizza- which Kaia stayed just long enough for before returning to the lake- and they all put on their comfiest pajamas and fluffiest socks before all settling in the living room. The lights were off in the room, but the light from the kitchen as Maddie finished loading the dishwasher cast its way into the space.

I sat on the floor, not playing or babbling like I usually did. I held Ducky close to my chest, looking at the floor in silence. I was still exhausted from the ordeal, but my mind was too much of a muddle to really focus on much.

Tails fiddled with one of his wrenches, widening and narrowing the jaw in and out absentmindedly.

Sonic picked at random pieces of fuzz stuck to his socks.

Knuckles had a piece of paper in his hands, and had been scribbling on it for a little while, though what exactly, I wasn't sure.

Maddie finally came into the living room and settled down on the couch, leaning against Tom with a sigh. For several moments, all that could be heard was the ticking of the clock on the wall.

I barely remembered what had happened; it had been all in a state of panic, but I'd heard voices... The voices of foes of my past, the voices of other victims of such horrors... I felt the cold of the lab, the pain of the experimental probes stabbing into my body over and over... I even heard my old voice muttering things... It was like someone else had taken the reins.

Part of me was glad I didn't remember, and part of me was worried that I couldn't. I didn't know how much of my past I'd uncovered, or if I'd hurt anyone. All that I could remember was seeing Sonic go down onto the floor, his strength draining away... And all I could see was that horrible day where *I'd* been the one responsible for his fall... When I'd killed him.

I didn't know *when* exactly the first tear fell from my face, but more followed, and more, and more... Soon I was lying on the rug in our living room, wailing and unable to stop myself.

Sonic had me in his arms quickly, holding me close and trying to use that same calming motion on my back, but it didn't work this time. I was in too deep, I was too trapped in my own guilt and shame over what I'd done before, and what I'd just done, that I was sinking deeper into a pit I couldn't escape.

Then I was in someone else's arms, but I didn't know whose until they spoke; it was Knuckles.
"Listen to my words, Obsidian. Listen to me."

I tried to focus on his face through blurry, teary eyes. I tried to listen, even though I felt like I was being crushed.

"You are not the one responsible."
I blinked away tears, raising my hands to wipe them away while still trying to look the echidna in the eye.
"You are not the one to whom lies the blame. What we saw today was not your fault."

"Knuckles, he doesn't understand that sort of stuff yet..." Tails sighed.

"No, he *does*." Knuckles informed firmly, holding me up to his face and then pulling me in close again. "You are upset because you believe you have hurt us, that what we saw will affect how we look at you from now on, that we will fear you... But it is not true."
He placed his hand on the back of my head, pretty well swallowing it in the material. "We do not think you are any less precious and important to us..."

"That's right." Sonic replied, "No matter what, we're family... In the good and the bad."

The tears still spilled, but I dug my fingers into Knuckles' fur, kneading it with my fingers as I sniffled.

"Besides," Sonic added, "What that *'Flames of Time'* person did or said wasn't *you*, right? You're not *him*."

My eyes opened again, looking at his smiling face. He was right... I'd been able to look past what the other Sonic had done to care about this one... Why couldn't I give myself the same second chance? A new life? Why couldn't I see myself as Obsidian and not as Mephiles, or even Solaris?

My attention was caught as Tom's phone buzzed and he picked it up. His face quickly shifted to horror, his eyes bugging out of his head. "Oh no... Oh no oh no-"

"What? What!?" Tails worried, "Is it GUN again?"

Tom shook his head, handing his phone off to Maddie. "...I totally forgot they were in the truck...!"

Maddie looked just as shocked, but she smiled a bit as she looked at the screen. "Oh dear, Mr. Wachowski-"

"I was freaking out, okay!? You guys were trapped and... Oh man, she's gonna *kill me*...!"

Maddie handed off the phone to Sonic, who looked at the screen and then showed it to the rest of us.

On the screen was a photo of Silver and Blaze, sitting on a couch, with a series of texts underneath. I wished I could read and know exactly what was said, but the smiley face at the end told me that it was somewhat light-hearted.

"They were with you?" Maddie asked.

"When Allison called to tell me you guys weren't answering the phone, I found them sitting in the truck wanting to come and see if they could help out. They were hiding in the truck when I got here and they must've snuck back out and gone home after GUN left."
Tom scrubbed his face with his hands.

Tails smiled, "Silver and Blaze wanted to help us... That's so nice of them!"

"Yeah..." Sonic hummed, "...Maybe Silver isn't so much of a buzzkill after-"
The blue hedgehog was muffled by a couch pillow being thrown at his head.

"Mind ya manners." Maddie warned.

I smiled a bit, the first time all day. These were my people, these were my brothers and mother and father, and Sonic was right; no matter what had happened in the past or what happened in the future... I needed to remind myself that I was not Mephiles anymore, or Solaris... I was Obsidian...Obsidian Wachowski.

The Wachowski family needed something to bring some life and smiles back into the house, and so a few days later- after making sure GUN was gone from town- Maddie made the offer for Allison to come over after work for dinner, and bring the two newcomers with her.

Silver was almost fully recovered from his illness, and so they agreed on Friday night, when the other boys didn't have school the next day.

It was a much kinder response than the last time Tails answered the front door.
"Hi, Blaze! Hi, Silver!" He greeted with a smile.

"Good evening, Tails." Blaze responded with a grin, "I hope we are not too late."

"Uh uh! Mom says that the roast is almost finished. Come on in!"

"Thank you, Tails." Allison responded with a smile, and then gently ushered them all inside the house. "Whew! A little chilly outside tonight."

"All too true..." Blaze carefully removed her coat, handing it to Allison to hang it up.

"Hey, I love your new boots, Silver!" Tails responded, pointing to the pair of black snow boots on the hedgehog's feet.

"They're actually a spare pair of Miss Allison's... But thank you, Tails." Silver folded his hands behind his back, "We were waiting to take me to the market and purchase some clothes for me until I had recovered, but then there was that whole incident with those men, and Miss Allison believed it was best to wait a little longer."

"We will soon," Allison replied, "But they're not too small or anything?"

"No, Ma'am. They're just fine..."

"Hey, guys!"
Maddie came out of the kitchen and gave the other woman a one-armed hug. "Welcome to our home!"

"Glad to be here, Maddie."

"Miss Maddie?" Blaze asked, "Is Kaia going to be here too?"

Maddie shook her head, "We offered, but... Kaia's still trying to get herself sorted out. But I'm sure you'll get to see her again soon..."
Maddie bent down and tapped Blaze's nose gently, "You girls have to stick together, am I right?"

"Mom," Tails asked, "Could we take Silver and Blaze and show them our room until dinner's done?"

"I don't have a problem with it, but you should ask Sonic and Knuckles too. It's their room too, you know."

"Fine with me!" Sonic announced as he zoomed up to the other hedgehog. "I've got a whole list of things I wanna show you!"

"O-Okay...!" Silver yelped as Sonic took his hand and started to tug him along, "I'm coming, no need to pull...!"

Sonic zipped up the steps and then turned back to Silver had stopped again, looking at something in the living room. "Come on, it's up here!"

"Coming..." Silver murmured again, moving up the steps much slower than Sonic. He paused as he reached the top, peering around cautiously before coming all the way up.

"Taa-Daa!" Sonic gestured to the room, "So this is my part of the room- most of the stuff up here's mine, actually! Part of being the first one here! Tails has his little spot over in that corner, and Knuckles has that side there! He mostly just has his little mat and sleeping bag- plus the toybox where we keep our stuff- but he says he doesn't need a lot of stuff."

Silver tried to follow the blue hedgehog around the room with his eyes, before closing them and rubbing his temples. "Are you *always* this fast and chatty, or is it just when you're *excited?*" He asked.

"Hmm? Oh!"
Sonic came to a stop, "Am I going too fast for ya? Sorry, I just haven't had new friends in a little while. Not like me, at least."

Silver opened his eyes again and gave a nod, "Okay..."

"Okay, so now that you're all recovered up-"
Sonic jumped up on top of the picnic table, standing over Silver with a grin. "Super cool powers demonstration! I've got my speed-"

The blue hedgehog began booking it around the room, back and forth in a blue flash of color. Silver covered his eyes with an arm to block the dust being kicked up by his fellow teenager, and then Sonic was suddenly back on the bed. "...Wow."

Sonic beamed, "Fastest thing alive! Now it's your turn! Come on, hit me!"

"Oh no no no." Silver waved his hands in surrender, "Bad idea. I don't want to hit you, Sonic, I might *hurt* you!"

"No no, it's just an expression! It means show me what you got!"

"Oh... Well, I still don't know..."

"What's the matter?"

"Well... This room's a little cramped..."

"Oh... Do you want more space to demonstrate? We can always- Whoa!"
Sonic struggled to keep his balance as the bed suddenly lifted up and off the floor, surrounded by a light cyan aura, just like Silver's hands and flickering from the edges of his eyes.
"Whoa...! That's awesome! How much can you lift?"

Silver's brows were furrowed in concentration, "I can lift a lot more than just you and a bed." He remarked, "I also have some telepathy too, but so far the best I can do is give people bad headaches."
He placed the bed back down and then turned towards the steps to the downstairs, "It's still nice to know that Blaze has my back, though..."

"Yeah... It's pretty amazing what people without powers can do when they put their minds to things."

Silver's ears pricked a bit, "...Is *that* what she told you...? No powers..."

"Wait, so she *does* have powers?" Sonic frowned, "Why would she say she *didn't?*"

Silver gave a sad smile, "It's probably because she doesn't *like* her powers. She only uses them if she has to, and even then you can tell she's not happy about it."

"Why wouldn't she like her powers?"

Silver waved a hand, "It's not my place to tell you... If she ever wants you to know, she will tell or show you."

"That's what she said about *you*... You guys sure do like to keep each other's secrets."

"It's called respect for one's privacy, Sonic."
Silver's aura reappeared, but this time around himself, and he floated upwards to sit on top of the dresser. "So... What does your father do?"

"He's the town sheriff!" Tails announced as he flew up into the attic, having overheard the question. "It's his job to make sure that everyone follows the rules and to help people in need."

"All on his own?"

"Well no, there's Wade too, but Green Hills is usually a pretty quiet, peaceful town."

"When Robotnik isn't here...!" Sonic grumbled, "I really hope we never see that guy again..."

Silver hummed softly, "This Robotnik person was a nuisance to the town?"

"That's putting it lightly." Sonic hopped up onto the dresser with his fellow hedgehog, "He showed up to try and capture me, and then to kill me."

"Why?"

"Because he's a terrible person who wanted to take over the world, and I was in his way... Or he wanted to use me as a weapon against other people."

"I...I see... What happened to him?"

"I stopped his giant robot from destroying the town, and when it crashed... He disappeared. A lot of people think he died in the crash, but... We've thought he was gone for good *before* and we were *wrong*."

Silver hummed again, his expression shifting to one of deep thought. "What will you do if he returns?"

Sonic shrugged, "The last time he showed up, we were extremely unprepared... He almost completely destroyed our house... And what about you? You and Blaze grow up together?"

Silver smiled a little, "Yeah... She and I have known each other for as long as we can remember... We've faced a lot together."

"So... Does that mean you like her?"

Silver's attention turned back to Sonic, his brows furrowing. "Of course I like her, she's my friend."

"No, I mean... Do you *like* her?"

Silver blinked, "...That's the same thing you just asked me."

Sonic waved a hand in dismissal, "Eh, nevermind... So, I guess you and Blaze didn't really have anyone either."

Silver's ears drooped a bit, "...No... There was a badger that tended to us when we were really little, but then one day he just... Disappeared... Same with everyone else we met. It was just the two of us... Trying to survive in a world that was on the verge of complete destruction."

"What happened...?" Tails asked.

Silver's ears drooped a little more, "...A disaster."
There was a moment of silence, and then he hopped off of the dressed and headed towards the steps, "I'm going to go see how Blaze is doing..."

They watched the other hedgehog wander into the rest of the house, and Sonic frowned. "A disaster...? What kind of disaster?"

Tails shrugged, "But we'd better not push it. Let him talk about it when he's ready."
His ears then pricked, "Speaking of *'ready,'* the food's done!"

The pair hurried back down the stairs to the main level, and found Blaze helping Knuckles set the table, and Silver was on the floor with Obsidian. The light-furred hedgehog sat cross-legged, his hands resting in his lap and his head tilted to one side. Obsidian had tilted his head in the same direction, and when Silver shifted it the other way, the toddler mimicked it.

"I didn't really see him at the clinic..." Silver murmured, shifting direction with his head once more.

"Having fun there, boys?" Allison asked, and Silver gave a light smile.

"Guess so, Miss Allison..."

Sonic thought back to the end of the dreamscape, of the three hedgehogs that had appeared. Two of them had definitely been himself and Silver, but who was the third, and why were the three of them so important?
He remembered them being gold... Like when he'd used the Chaos Emeralds. Did that mean that Silver could do the same with them? Could he go golden too?

"Alright, let's get to eatin'!" Tom announced, "That meat's not gonna serve itself!"

It was decided that the 'kids' would sit at the table, while the adults got to sit and talk in the living room.

Sonic and Tails sat on one side, Silver and Knuckles on the other, and Blaze on one end, with Obsidian in the living room with the adults. The adults in the living room began in conversation, which became soft background noise as the kids began to eat their meal.

Silver and Blaze both picked up the utensils, holding them curiously before attempting to use them. Blaze was far better at it, and Silver winced as the fork broke through the small potatoes on the side, clanking loudly against the glass plate.
"Sorry..." He murmured softly, his ears folding back.

"Don't worry about it, Silver." Tails encouraged, "Knuckles had some trouble getting used to using eating utensils too at first."

Knuckles nodded, "It is true. My tribe would use knives to cut and slice up our food, but beyond preparation, it was all eaten with our hands. It was also difficult to adjust to how... *Fragile* the humans' utensils are. I bent quite a few with my strength when I first arrived."

Blaze smiled, "You must be quite strong then, Knuckles. Did *all* of your tribe possess such strength?"

Knuckles shook his head, "It was a gift granted to me alone... My father said it was a sign from the gods that I was destined for great things."

Blaze hummed with interest, pausing in her eating to listen to the echidna as he spoke. Sonic saw Silver's ears fold back a little bit, but even he seemed to notice and quickly moved them back up with a flick each.

"Do you and Silver have your own rooms at Allison's house?" Tails asked curiously.

"No," Silver admitted, giving a light smile to the fox. "We currently are still sleeping in the front living space, but Miss Allison stated that it is only because she has not been able to get us real beds yet. There are spare rooms, but honestly..."
Silver picked up one of the pieces of potato with a jab of his fork, "...I am not certain I want to have my own space without her."

"Really..." Sonic hummed, before being elbowed by Tails.

Blaze nodded in agreement, "The two of us have always slept together, side by side. It was a way to ensure that we did not get separated. If we do wind up with our own sleeping quarters, I have a feeling it will take some time to get used to."

"Have you talked to Allison about it?"

"Indeed. She suggested that for now, we can have the same room, but each have one side designated to us and that we will be responsible for keeping in order."

"Seems reasonable enough." Knuckles hummed, "It is a similar way to our own room, though I must say that Sonic's portion is not usually as clean as it is this day."

Sonic frowned, "Everything has its place, Knux."

"And that place is oftentimes a pile in front of the steps, where Mother could easily trip and injure herself."

Sonic started to stand up from his chair, "You wanna go, Echidna?"

Silver waved a hand, and Sonic felt a light tug on his quills. "Peace..." The light-furred hedgehog warned nervously, "No need to get antagonistic over something so minor."

"That's right!" Maddie called from the living room, "Settle down."

The possibility of a fight eased out, and Sonic returned to his seat, though still frowning.

Tails tried to lighten the conversation again, "I'm glad you're feeling better, Silver."

Silver nodded, "Me too... That sickness was awful, and Miss Allison said that it might've been caused by simply being too cold in the elements!" His shoulder slumped a bit, "Although, I can't say that I'm fully used to such cold... It was never cold where we were."

"You resided in the tropics?" Knuckles guessed.

Blaze sat up a little bit more, "I believe so... It's hard to say exactly, because we lost most of the maps and information on our region in the disaster."

"Yeah, Silver mentioned that earlier..." Sonic hummed, "...What kind of disaster?"

Silver looked to his friend, "*You* tell them... You know the history better."

Blaze was quiet for a moment, as if pulling herself together, and then she began her tale...

Chapter End Notes

One more chapter after this one and this part of the story will be done!

Chapter 14: In the Quiet Hours of the Night

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Many, many years ago... My ancestors were the leaders of a kingdom, a land comprised of many islands, and of many harbors. These were known as the Sol Islands, from which my family is named.

"The majority of the kingdom and its denizens resided on the largest island, and as such, so did much of the trade and culture. It was a prosperous land, and was often threatened by lingering pirates on its edges, but brave souls were sent out to protect the trade ships and harbors from the blight, and everything seemed peaceful... But something was happening beneath the surface of the islands, something was festering.

"Resting over the kingdom on the largest island stood a massive mountain, peaks reaching into the clouds like the tiers of a crown... But what we didn't know- or perhaps the majority of the kingdom didn't know- was that this mountain, known as Pele... Was a volcano.

"One day... Pele's crown was shattered by a massive eruption. Massive boulders were flung down on the cities, lava and burning mud streamed down her face like tears, and her cries shook the waters. The explosion and following aftershocks decimated the main island, and the tsunamis formed by the trembling sunk and scrubbed clean the small islands... The kingdom was in ruin.

"The surviving people, including my ancestors, sent messages onward to neighboring kingdoms for help... But it never came. It is not known why for certain; perhaps the messages never reached them, perhaps similar disasters had shaken their kingdoms as well, or perhaps... They did not care enough to send aid. Whatever happened, the people were left on their own, trying to survive in what was left... Decades later, the volcano was still weeping, preventing much in the way of rebuilding... That was the world Silver and I were born into... A world on fire and surrounded by boiling waters, unknowing if there was a safe place out there across the waters where we could live... So we stayed."

Blaze's story had settled in Knuckles' head, and it had stayed all the rest of that night. After dinner, they'd cleaned up their places- Sonic offering what was left of his roast meat to Ozzie- and then they all came together in the living room, playing a game of Scrabble.
Tails won pretty easily, though he kept getting disappointed when he would be missing one letter to make a long, scientific word that Sonic was *certain* wasn't even a real thing.

When it was starting to get late and Obsidian had fallen over from falling asleep sitting up, Allison and the two visitors donned their coats and then bid the Wachowski's farewell for the night.

Now, lying on the floor of the attic and listening to the sounds of the wind whistling against the windows, Knuckles had time to really think about everything Blaze had said.

He had come from a proud, prosperous tribe, a tribe that- as he'd learned in the last few months- made some pretty lousy and selfish choices a long time ago. Choices that had led the tribe he knew to be primarily driven by one thing; to find the Master Emerald and be restored to their possession.

But even with that drive and how it had influenced his upbringing, there had been *other* things. There were dances, feasts and holidays to uphold every year... He still had a *culture*, a history to call back to in the late evenings. Amongst the war training and the sharpening of tools and weapons, there was fruit picking, fishing, simply enjoying the sun and each other's company.

Knuckles tried to think what it would have been like to have been perhaps wandering the forest with his father, learning from his years of experience- and then out of nowhere, the ground split open and lava spewed forth like geysers, and for the entire forest floor to be shattered by fire and death in perhaps only moments.

This had happened before Blaze and Silver were even *alive,* but they had been born into this world and had to fight just to *stay alive* from that moment on. Every morning they awoke and had to find food, shelter, resources, in a world what didn't have much left. Every morning, they awoke wondering if there *was* anything left...

That wasn't living, that was just surviving... And Knuckles had never been so relieved to know that Silver and Blaze had been able to get away from it and to someone who could help them live... And be loved.

"Knuckles...?"
Knuckles sat up, the soft voice coming from the corner. In the darkness, he saw Tails climbing out of his bed and tiptoeing over to the echidna's mat. "Did I *wake* you...?"

Knuckles shook his head, confused as he'd thought that *he'd* woken up *Tails.* "No... Did *I* wake *you?*"

Tails shook his head, taking a seat beside his older brother. He curled one of his tails around him, his knees pulled up to his chest and his arms resting on them. "...I'm worried."

"What about?"

Tails' ears drooped a bit, "...Shadow." He breathed, "After what you and I *saw*... And what that zombie Sonic *said*... I'm worried about what happened to him."

"After the attack..."

Tails nodded, "...His sister gave her life to save him, but it sounds like they still got him and he's *trapped* somewhere. Do you think... Do you think that's why they wanted Sonic so bad before? Because they thought he might be like Shadow?"

Knuckles shrugged, "...I cannot say... There is much about what we saw that we do not know... And we still do not know why Obsidian would show it to us..."

Both were quiet again for a several seconds, and Tails lifted his head, his brows furrowed. "We have to *find* him, Knuckles... We *have to.*"

Knuckles pulled an arm around the fox, squeezing him against his side a little. "We will, Tails... We will."

She'd show them, she'd show them all.

"I will be the greatest thief in the galaxy... I will be the greatest thief in the galaxy..." She whispered to herself. This air duct wasn't the smallest one she'd infiltrated, but it was certainly a tight squeeze.

The Guild, the collective of the best thieves in the world that had raised her, thought that she couldn't complete this mission on her own, she'd show *them!* The whispers of *Project Shadow* had reached their hideout, tales of a treasure immeasurable, a power source of untold potential, and Rouge the Bat was going to be the one to snatch it up.

The pitch black of the vent wasn't really a problem for Rouge, she could see just fine, but still, every so often she would give a soft chirp, much too high for the human ear to pick up, and then close her eyes; she was mapping out the various passages in her head, seeing further ahead than any human's night-vision goggles could ever *hope* to see.

She knew she was getting close... She could feel it in her bones, and in the chill of the air. Such a big power source would need to be kept in a cool environment after all, and she was starting to see her breath whenever she pulled her mask down to get in gulps of fresh air.

In the chill, she could feel the tiny, white stone in her pocket radiating a gentle heat; it *too* was some sort of power source, but she would have to prove herself to her peers before she could ever hope to show it off and *not* have it taken from her.

The trail of cool, moist air led her deeper into the compound; getting *into* the compound was the *easy* part. She had a feeling it wouldn't be so easy getting *out*; hauling a big engine out of here when alarms were blaring and government agents were on the prowl was going to be a much bigger challenge, but it would be worth it, and she could do it... She was going to be the greatest thief in the galaxy, and no silly army was going to stop her.

Finally, light emerged, and she peered down through the grate. Below her, she could see a small room, with a large circle in the center of the floor and fog pouring out from under the edges; this was definitely it.

"Perfect...!" She whispered to herself, "...Piece of cake hauling an engine out of here that's almost twice my size... I've got this. I've got-"
She paused as she felt a tug, and saw that her suit had gotten caught on one of the grates of the vent cover. She reached to pull it loose, and then gasped as the little white stone tumbled out of her pocket and through the grate. "No no no-!"

She watched in silent horror as the stone tumbled and bounced around the equipment in the room below, before finally landing on some sort of console and settling against a lever.

She waited... But no alarms sounded. Her presence was still invisible.

Rouge gave a sigh of relief, and then pulled her sleeve loose from the grate and made her way to a shaft that went down to the floor.

So far, so good.

She reached through the grate and pulled the screws loose, before carefully climbing out. Now that she was out of that tight space, she stretched her wings out a bit to reduce the cramp they were getting from being pressed against her shoulders. "Ah...That's better..." She whispered, "...Now, to get this thing open and out of here before-"

All at once the little white stone began to glow, and the machines around began to hum. Lights flashed to life, beeping and whines singing out... And then outside of the room, Rouge heard an alarm begin to sound.

Maybe she should try to get out while she still could...

She stepped back as the circle in the center of the room then hissed, filling the room with fog that clouded her vision as it rose up and out of the floor. Even though the fog however, she could see something like a silhouette inside of the capsule... What was inside of it?

The front of the capsule opened, and then she heard a series of clacks like locks opening, before a *figure* stumbled out of the pod, falling to their hands and knees with a pained grunt. As the fog dissipated, she could see it was a hedgehog- one from her home planet- and not much older than she was; *physically,* of course. Who knew just how long they'd been trapped in this machine... Was this a prison of some sort?

He pulled himself up to his feet, his crimson eyes piercing through the darkness of his black quills and fur like tiny lasers. Was this engine *powered* by this hedgehog, or... Was the hedgehog the engine *itself?*

She was reminded of the alarms; no doubt the guards would be coming this way any second. She snatched up the gemstone once more and prepared to flee, but then realized the hedgehog had seen her... He could *describe* her, *identify* her!

The hedgehog looked at her and then placed a hand on his chest. "You have awakened me from a long slumber... I am-"

"Gonna snitch? Like I'm gonna let *that* happen!"
She grabbed his arm and tugged him away with a strength that seemed to surprise him. "You're coming with *me,* Quill Pickle!"

"A-Alright, alright! No need to *drag* me!" He pulled his arm free and followed her back to her exit route, back into the ventilation shaft.

"You first."

"Why?"

"Because I don't expect you to keep up if *I* go first! Just *go!*"
She shoved him forward, and he gave a glare before clambering into the shaft and she followed. The truth was that she didn't expect him to come with her unless she kept him from bolting by staying behind him. "Go left."

"Why?"

"That's the way I came in...! Do you want to get out of here or not...!?"

He rolled his eyes and then shimmied further down the vent.

Rouge grumbled, this had better be worth it, because if not, she had a few choice words for her mentor-

"Oh, and you dropped this again back there."
Rouge looked up, seeing he had the white stone in his hand and was holding it out.

She didn't know *what* told her to do it, but she knew that as the hedgehog held out the stone and it began to glow brighter, she needed to hold onto him. She grabbed tightly to his leg, and he gave a pained yelp before there was a flash. One moment, she was inside of a confined ventilation shaft, and the next, she was falling a few feet down into a grassy field. "Wha-Ooof!"
She winced as she sat up, "Are you *crazy!?* What were you trying to *do!?*"

The hedgehog didn't respond. He stood still for a moment- clearly favoring the leg she'd touched- before the other leg collapsed out from under him and he crashed into the grass with a whimper- tiny, golden sparks fading away and the stone still in his hand as he went limp.

"Oh great...!" She groaned, getting up to her feet and walking over to him. She checked to make sure he was still breathing, and then grabbed him under the arms and unfolded her wings, beating them hard to get aloft. "Come on, sleeping beauty... We've got a ways to go back to the hideout..."

She had a feeling the officers and guards in that compound would be angry, that they'd start looking for evidence of who had freed their prisoner...

...But she had no idea that less than a minute after their escape, a man that had spent months infiltrating the ranks- working tirelessly to get access to Project Shadow on behalf of his beloved boss- would enter the room and find it missing, his efforts wasted...

...and his determination to get that weapon back burning hotter than ever.

Chapter End Notes

Part 2 of this little series of adventures is over, with plenty of room for more adventure and excitement in the future!

Thanks for reading, commenting, leaving kudos, all that fun stuff! I will be working hard to make sure the next part is the best it can be, and a lot of what gets me going is knowing all of you are enjoying what I have to share! So thank you all from the bottom of my heart for the encouragement- in all the forms it takes. :)

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